

AGNES HEIDTMAN

Interviewee: Agnes Lander Schmith Heidtman

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Description

Agnes Lander Schmith Heidtman retired from the University of Nevada, Reno on June 30, 2001, after fifty-three years of service to the university community. Many of her years of service were in the office of the president, so she has a unique perspective on the personalities of at least thirteen different presidents. Ms. Heidtman first came to the university for a two-week temporary job with the Agricultural Experiment Station, labeling plants in the herbarium with their Latin names. She started December 8, 1938 and retired some sixty-three years later (having taken ten years off between 1954 and 1964).

Ms. Heidtman witnessed firsthand the growth of the university support staff from 5 secretaries in 1938 to over 1,200 in the classified staff today. During that time the number of campus buildings increased from about 20 to nearly 90. Student population grew from 1,263 in the 1938-39 school year to over 13,000 in the 2000-2001 school year—an increase of tenfold. She has worked with every office machine imaginable, from manual typewriters to personal computers.

In her oral history, Ms. Heidtman shares not only her university career, but her delightful youth growing up on a ranch in Reno, as well as the story of her Albert, the love of her life.

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From oral history interviews
conducted and edited
by Kathleen Coles

University of Nevada
Oral History Program

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PREFACE

Since 1965 the University of Nevada Oral History Program (UNOHP) has been collecting an eyewitness account of Nevada's remembered past. While there is no standard chronicler profile nor rigid approach to interviewing, each oral history plumbs human memory to gain a better understanding of the past. Following the precedent established by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (and perpetuated since by academic programs such as ours throughout the English-speaking world) these manuscripts are called oral histories. Some confusion surrounds the meaning of the term. To the extent that these "oral" histories can be read, they are not oral, and while they are useful historical sources, they are not themselves history. Still, custom is a powerful force; historical and cultural records that originate in tape-recorded interviews are almost uniformly labeled "oral histories," and our program follows that usage.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability. The UNOHP uses certain editorial conventions to add context to written representations of the spoken word. Amusement or laughter is represented with [laughter] at the end of the sentence; and ellipses are used, not to indicate that material has been deleted, but to indicate that a statement has been interrupted or is incomplete . . . or there is a pause for dramatic effect. For readers

who are interested in examining the unaltered records, copies of the tape-recorded interviews can be accessed by appointment at the UNOHP's reading room in Reno.

As with all oral history projects, it should be noted that Agnes Heidtman has recorded her *remembered* past, and while the program can vouch that this is a true representation of her recollections as provided to the interviewer, memory is never flawless. Readers should exercise the same caution used when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other primary sources of historical information.

UNOHP
July 2002

INTRODUCTION

Agnes Lander Schmith Heidtman retired from the University of Nevada, Reno on June 30, 2001, after fifty-three years of service to the university community. Many of her years of service were in the office of the president, so she has a unique perspective on the personalities of at least thirteen different presidents. Ms. Heidtman first came to the university for a two-week temporary job with the Agricultural Experiment Station, labeling plants in the herbarium with their Latin names. She started December 8, 1938 and retired some sixty-three years later (having taken ten years off between 1954 and 1964).

Ms. Heidtman witnessed firsthand the growth of the university support staff from 5 secretaries in 1938 to over 1,200 in the classified staff today. During that time the number of campus buildings increased from about 20 to nearly 90. Student population grew from 1,263 in the 1938-39 school year to over 13,000 in the 2000-2001 school year—an increase of tenfold. She has worked with every office machine imaginable, from manual typewriters to personal computers.

The oral history interviews, conducted between July and October of 2001, took place in Ms. Heidtman's spacious home in southwest Reno, where picture windows overlook the city, and we were surrounded by her collections of thimbles, china plates,



A recent photograph of Agnes with two of her dogs.

and needlepoint. Her dogs have always been an important constant in her life—she has always had one named Sizzler—and they kept a watchful eye on the whole interview process. Ms. Heidtman was very generous in opening her vast photo collection and offered many more photos than we could possibly use. In her oral history, Ms. Heidtman shares not only her university career, but her delightful youth growing up on a ranch in Reno, as well as the story of her Albert, the love of her life. It was a total joy working with Ms. Heidtman, recording her memories, and sharing her laughter. She said many times during the interviewing process, “I’ve had a wonderful life.”

KATHLEEN COLES
Reno, Nevada
July 2002

UNIVERSITY CAREER

I FIRST CAME TO WORK at the university in December of 1938. I had a friend from Gardnerville, Golamae Johnson, and she was a school teacher. She came to Reno, and we were good friends. She knew Dr. Sam Doten. She said, “Agnes, why don’t you come and work for the university? I can hire you for two weeks at twenty-five dollars a week, because we’ve got to have that herbarium fixed, and I haven’t had time, and Dr. Doten is very anxious to get it done.” So that’s where I wound up—at the Hatch building. I put the Latin names on the plants. Oh, and they were piled like that, you know. [laughs, indicates stack three-feet high] Oh, I don’t know. I think it was a thousand plants, because the CCC boys and the WPA—they had twenty-five of each of those that were helping me when I started. And they found them somewhere. [laughter]

So, we all worked there. And then, when that was done, I was told to go and see Dr. Doten. Dr. Doten says, “Miss Schmith, I want you to work as my secretary, but first, I’m going to send you over there to help the boys get this thing going in Elko for all the forage that they have to have.” So, I worked with that.

And then, he come over, and he said, “Miss Schmith, I want you to come see me.”

I thought, "Oh, what have I done now?" [laughter]

He said, "Well, my secretary is leaving May 18 to be married, and I need a secretary, and I've watched you do this work. And would you be my secretary?" So that's how I got in with Doten. [laughter] He was a marvelous man. Oh, he was such a smart man. So, then I went over to be his secretary, and he gave me this big, big book. "Now," he says, "I want you to work on all those and see how much money is in each column." And it was in June. You weren't supposed to have a lot of money left over, because you had government money. So, he says, "Would you take that and give me an account?"

And I say, "OK".

So, I got it all done, and I gave it to him, and he said, "I've never had that much money left like this, this late in the year. Now, what do I do?" [pounds table]

"I don't have any idea what you do."

"Well, I can't do it. I've got too much money."

"Well, that's not my problem," I said, "I didn't want this job, anyhow." So I went home. [laughter]

Well, he was so *mad* about those columns, and I didn't know anything about the damn books! [laughter] Excuse me . . . darn books! And so, anyhow, he came over. He'd been at our house, because he lost his wife, and every Thursday night, my mother would have him over for dinner, so he knew where I lived. So he came over, and he said, "Miss Schmith, I want to apologize to you, because all those funds were found over in the controller's office." The controller then was Perry Hayden. Anyway, the funds were all taken care of—all encumbered. [laughter]. Now, I didn't know anything about the accounting system, but I had all that money, see? And here are all the papers. And the money is all encumbered over there in that office. And he said he was sorry that he caused me so much trouble. "Would you please come back? I know we can get along."

"Well, I'll think about it." [laughter]

"Oh, *please*, don't hold it against me."

I had no idea of them being where they were. That's where they belonged. But, *I* didn't know it. [laughter]

He knew I was working for the Elks Club. I was office manager and everything there. So, I came back, and we got along fine. Oh, Sam Doten was a wonderful man. We had a lot of fun. He was a fun . . . oh, he was a wonderful man. Beautiful man, and he had a beautiful wife—and she died of cancer—and they were a darling couple. He went to Rotary every Thursday at lunch. So, I'd take him down to wherever it was—it was usually in the Mapes. So I'd take him down and let him out, and then he'd walk back to the university. You know, we used to go there every Saturday night. And then every Thursday night, I would pick him up when I got through with work and take him home to have dinner with us, and he looked forward to being home with my folks and Albert and just enjoyed being with us. Had home cooking. And then whenever he wanted to go anywhere, why, I'd take him. He had a car, but he'd rather not be responsible for his car. He wanted me to go to Fallon and things like that with him, because they had interest up there, and I'd go up there. He wanted me to be aware of everything his job was. And we had so many good times.

Then he let me have Oliver Smith and Dr. Church, and in 1945 I had Dr. Joseph Robertson, too. His wife is the singer. So I worked for all of them. But Dr. Church—oh, he was a wonderful man. He was known worldwide for his snow deal—measuring the snowfall up at Mount Rose. He and his wife and his dog could go up there, and that's where he perfected that. And then he went all over the world. He was in Greenland for I don't know how long, and then he went to different countries. They invited him to help them install it. The last one, I don't know where it was, but his age was telling on him. He was an outstanding scientist. He went to this one country. They invited him, and he rode mules to get to the high mountains—and he was in his eighties then! But he went, and he went way up to the mountains and everything. At that deal, he was written up in all kinds of books and things about him being the seventeenth outstanding scientist or something.

I got to do *all* the things for him. [laughter] Yes, all his letters and all his invitations—letters that he replied to in about seven different languages. And I didn't know any language, but I could

have learned it, if I'd had some teaching to tell me what I was doing. I learned a lot of foreign language just by typing it.

Then, he said, "Now, Miss Schmith . . ." It was around July. He said, "Now, don't think I'm queer or funny or nasty, because I want you to send out my Christmas cards."

"What?"

"Well," he said, "I don't send them out until July."

I said, "Oh, and what country is that from?" [laughter]

He said, "Well, it's my idea. I get most of my Christmas cards by July, and then I can send them their cards." So I had all these foreign names and everything. Well, it was interesting, but I couldn't *speak* any of them! He could speak six or seven languages. Oh, I wish I had a picture of him. He was a little, short, fat man, and everybody called him at Christmas, Santa Claus! Yes.

Now, Dr. Doten—oh, he was wonderful. He'd go and skate on Manzanita Lake when it was frosted over, and we'd have a pot of soup getting hot, so when we finished skating, we'd go back in the office and have lunch. [laughter] And he was a beautiful skater. All of our office skated. [laughter] Always at noon. He always closed the door, and he'd say, "Come on, we're going to go skating. Then we'll have our soup."

You know, that's where you *really miss* the fun. People nowadays are too involved with things. They're not interested in things like that. Now, how many bosses would close their office and go out and skate with you for the noon hour? And then come back and let you have soup? Not many.

It was a fun place to work. Everything. Every place I've worked, everyone I've worked with, has been very much fun.

I remember Dr. Oliver Smith. He's a good-looking man. He had a beautiful wife. Dr. Doten had a beautiful wife until she died of cancer. And Oliver Smith—he was something. Who did he remind you of? He's dressed beautifully to come to work—tie and suit—and still he had his alfalfa plants out there on the university farm. [laughter] So I became his secretary. Doten said, "You can work with her, can't you?"

Dr. Smith says, "Well, I know I can work with her. I hope she can work with me." [laughter] So, he put me wherever he wanted me.

Joseph Robertson. He was a *wonderful* man. He traveled all over to India and everything else, because that's where his children went to school and things. They were going to, I don't know, all those foreign countries every time, and they were enrolled in the foreign schools. His wife—*she* had the most *gorgeous* singing voice. She's still alive. Wasn't too long she came up to the office, and she says, "Oh, Agnes, you're still here. Joseph would be so proud of you." Oh, and he was just over in that other building right by Morrill Hall, right in the back. So that's where he was, and every time he was over there working, he'd come to Morrill Hall and visit with me. He was a wonderful man, and he had a wonderful family, and that wife of his—she came in, and she says, "I bet you don't know me."

And I say, "I bet I do. You're Mrs. Robertson."

She says, "Well, I was wondering—somebody told me you were still here, and I wanted to come up and visit with you." We had a nice visit. But he had passed on last . . . two years ago, and he was in his nineties. [laughter]

Charles Fleming was just down one step from Doten, and he was on the university ranch—he worked there. He took over when Dr. Doten retired. He had a home over on Evans Avenue, beautiful home. Then he didn't live too long. He died of a heart attack. And I had seen him. Where was I? I was walking on campus, and he caught up with me, and he says, "I haven't seen you for a while."

I say, "Oh? I'm still in the place where I am." And I say, "How are you doing?"

He says, "Oh, pretty good, I guess." And about three days later, he died. He had a heart attack. He has a son that is a doctor in Reno. He does brain surgery.

It was wonderful working with the CCC and WPA boys. Yes. Every Friday my mother would make a great big cake, and they'd go out and get ice cream, and we'd have two hours before work was over. [laughter] They were from all over, all over the country. I kept in contact with all of them. After they went to war and stuff, mother and I made sweaters for them, and we'd send candy. We'd send cake in a pan, because in these foreign countries, where they were, they got nice big grapes and figs and stuff, and they'd

send the pans back with that in them. But we'd send the cake in that way. And then I'd write to every one of them every week. I kept in touch with all of them, and only one was lost in the service.

After the service was over, why, most of them married their sweethearts in their home place. I always heard from them and everything, and one of them, Steve, married his sweetheart in Washington D.C. That's where they lived, and I went there one time with my physiotherapist, Eva Martin, who was my neighbor for twenty-one years. She said, "Come on and go to Washington D.C. I got to go there to a meeting."

I said, "What?"

She said, "Well, just pack on a little extra change of clothes, and we go." We went. And when I did, I knew Steve was around Washington, so I called him and told him I was going to be there. Well, then he showed up at the hotel with his wife and his baby boy. So we had a nice visit. Then he decided that I shouldn't be sitting there while she's at the meeting, so they put me in a car and took me all around Washington and everything. I kept in contact with him. Then, Albert and I and Steve and his wife went to Hawaii for a week, and we had a lot of fun. So he was working in Washington, and we decided we'd contact each other. We'd take turns. I'd have one, and then the next one would be his turn to call. He had three sons. One of them was a neurologist, and he married a woman that was a baby doctor, a pediatrician. The other boy went to New York in the stock market. He had a good job. The younger boy was a postman, mail carrier.

Then I called, he'd call, and then I'd call. His wife was always on the other end of the phone. And I called this one day, and I say, "Steve, is your wife on the other phone?"

"Agnes, she just died this morning."

"Oh, my God!" I say, "What happened?"

He says, "I don't know. She was screaming with pain, and she was bleeding, and I rushed her to the hospital, but she died right when I got there."

I said, "What was it?"

Well, then he called me back later, and he said, "They could . . . no doctor knows what's happened." But he said, "I'll let you know what they find."

Well, then I picked up the *Reader's Digest* shortly after that, and here was this whole story of this woman that had this, and she had a child, and she's the only one that was *ever cured*. It showed her with her husband and little boy walking, and it told the whole story, and it was all blood . . . come with blood, and how your body rejected it and everything.

Steve said, "She was just gone like that." Well, I just nearly had a fit. So, then I called him and told him that I had this whole story in the *Reader's Digest*. He said, "Send it to me." So I did, and he had the doctor check it, and that's exactly what she had. Several months after that he called me, and he said, "Could I come to Reno and visit with you for a little while? I've got to get away from here." He said, "My sons can take care of my home and everything." So, he came, and he stayed two weeks here. They had been here at this house before we went to Hawaii, and then the other house where we lived, they came. That was right when he got out of the army. And then, what did I do? I called last year, and they said, "We are sorry to report that he passed away."

So he was here three times. We went to all the museums and the automobile museum, and he'd had friends in Carson, and we just had a nice two weeks. [laughter]

So, I like to keep in touch with people. That's what I'm going to do the rest of my life—if they'll put up with me! [laughter]

I have a funny story about these WPA guys. I wore shoes with the toes out, you know? So, they had it fixed so that where they were working, when I was at my desk, they could flip rubber bands at my bare toes. [laughter] So, I said, "I'll get even with you guys." So, I had much longer hair—red hair—and this one was doing the map work, you know. I was sitting there at my desk, and I'd just had my hair done, and I come back, and I sat down. Here's the scissors—come right back here and cut my hair—a lock about six inches long. Just let it drop on the floor. And I said, "You're going to pay for this." And he didn't know what to say. [laughter]

Well, anyhow, I waited and waited, and he always wore ties. All the men wore ties, white shirts. So, I thought, "Hmm. He looks awfully busy over there." He was leaning over the maps, you know? So, he was just right for me to walk over there and cut his tie. His tie! [laughter]

“Whoa, my wife’s going to kill you for this tie.”

I said, “I don’t care. I could kill you for my hair!”

Oh, his wife called, and she said, “What are you doing?”

“He cut my hair, and it has to grow, but the tie doesn’t have to—it just has to be replaced.”

She got to laughing so hard. She says, “Thank goodness, you got something on him! He’s always playing tricks!”

There was a walnut tree out there in the corner by Morrill Hall—some kind of nuts. That’s what I was getting thrown at my toes all the time. They’d go, and when there were nuts on the tree, they’d get them and break them open and throw the shells at me. It’s good I was good natured—or some of them would have been laying flat! [laughter]

They were good, though. Every Friday mother made a big, big cake, and they’d go get ice cream. We’d spend the last hour in the office eating. Sometimes, though, the men would come and join you. Nowadays, you can’t get anybody to join you. Wouldn’t you love to have lived at that time?

After working in the College of Agriculture for several years, I resigned from the university in 1954. This was during the time of my mother’s death and my miscarriage and my uncle and aunt’s car accident. I didn’t come back to the university until 1964.

AGNES'S PRESIDENTS

ALICE TERRY was the secretary for the Board of Regents in 1964. One of the girls that she worked with in the office quit. Alice knew I worked at the Elks Club. She called me and said, “Agnes, would you like to come in for an interview with Dr. Charles Armstrong? I want you to come in and meet him, and maybe you could take my job.”

So I went in for an interview and . . . what did I do? Yes, they didn’t have anything that would fit my position at that time, so I was just hired as a secretary. They didn’t have like they do now—classifications. They had no classification for me. So, he says, “That’s all right. We’ll fix it. You just come on in, and when it’s classified time we’ll see about it.” And he was wonderful.

When I first started at the university in 1938 the president was Walter Clark. I only saw him once in awhile. He was very nice because he accepted me with no classification. He said, “I don’t need a classification of you.” So that’s the way it was with us, and his wife was nice. She was in the big white house that was up there—the president’s home. Once a week Mrs. Clark would have all the secretaries in for lunch in that beautiful home. It was nice for all of us, because all of us were first time in the president’s office, you know. That was her way of entertaining us. There were only about five of us on the whole campus. [laughter] There was

no jealousy about secretaries. Walter Clark was a very charming man, but he was not a well man.

Leon W. Hartman was president from 1938 to 1943. He was beautiful. Oh, he was a wonderful man. Well, I was there, and I worked with him. Hartman died in office. Let's see, about five years ago, his son came from back East, and it was an annual banquet affair, and he looked me up. He says, "I've asked in here if Agnes Heidtman is around here. They said, 'Yes, she's over there.'"

He came over and told me that he was Hartman's son, and that his wife wanted to meet me because his father always said, "She was such a nice secretary."

Oh, he's a nice looking man. Well, he was from the East, but he said, "When we got the invitation for this dinner, I told my wife I was going to see if I could find Agnes Heidtman." He found me. [laughter]

After Hartman, there was Dr. Charles H. Gorman, acting president. Oh, he was a peach of a guy! [laughter] He was so nice and always, "You getting along all right? Can I get anything for you? You need anything?"

"No."

"Well, just tell me."

Well, then I was going to be married, and he was so smart about invitations and things. So he says, "You're going to get married, huh?"

I say, "Sure." So, he got hold of a whole bunch, and they had a luncheon for me out on the university farm before I got married—everybody that was involved with me. I had seven bridesmaids. Mother and I made all those dresses and my dress and her dress. Well, he had that party for me, and then he did make my wedding invitations. He made them for me.

I said, "I didn't expect you to."

He said, "Now, look, I love to do those things, and I can't do it all the time, because I haven't got enough girls to get married now. I want you to have that." And so, he made all my wedding invitations. Four hundred. We had four hundred at our wedding. Oh, his family was lovely. He was a nice man.

After Gorman was John Moseley. He was a nice guy. A lot of people didn't get to him, but he was a good president, and he was

very nice at any, you know, affair, that he should be there. He was very proper and very nice. He was a nice looking man. He was a real good president. He liked his job and tended to his job, but he was always good to me. [laughter]

After Moseley was Gilbert Parker. He was the acting president in 1949 to 1950. He was a nice guy—nothing snooty about him or anything. He was real easy to get along with and always, “Now, if you can’t get it done, I’ll get somebody to help you.”

I said, “I’ll get it done.” [laughter]

So when he came in he’d say, “I’ll get it done.”

I always had him going. [laughter] Yes, my life has been very happy, as you can tell.

Next came Malcolm Love. Oh, he *was* a love. Oh, yes. *He* was a love. Everything you wanted to do, you could do. Yes. You know, a lot of people didn’t . . . well, they liked him, but if you were in the crowd, you could feel the uneasiness of the people around him. He was a charming man, and he liked everybody, but they always figured he was aloof when they appeared. And people around here can do that. The people . . . he wants to be friendly, but they, because he’s the president, let him take care of things. That’s my reputation with him. But he was a wonderful man.

Minard Stout was president from 1952 to 1957. I knew him for a couple years. He was a nice guy, one you’d like.

After Stout was William Wood. I knew he was the acting president, but I didn’t have any contact with him.

Now, Charles Armstrong, oh, he was a darling! Oh! He *was* a nice man. He had a nice family and good children, and he loved Hawaii. So, his wife’s father had something to do with Hawaii, with transferring things there and back and forth, I don’t know. Anyhow, he had children, and he was really funny. My dad had a big orchard where we lived and a big ranch—a good garden of everything. So, President Armstrong came out, and I asked him if he wanted some corn and some vegetables. My dad said, “Ask him.”

So, here he comes in a Hawaiian shirt and pair of shorts, [laughter] and his wife was with him, and that little dog was with him. Then, after she got the corn and everything, his wife says, “I don’t know how to fix corn.”

I say, "Put it in a pan of hot water and get it done and then cool it and eat it." [laughter]

She says, "Would you come over and help me?" So I went over and helped her with her corn.

My dad says, "You come anytime you want." They were very fond of vegetables, and *he* had plenty of vegetables. The whole neighborhood got their vegetables from my dad. But Armstrong was nice. Now, he died just not too long ago. He was in San Diego, and so I was going down to San Diego, because I won the trip with the . . . where all the gals get prizes or something. I won a trip to San Diego for two. So I went down to San Diego with Tim Jones. I asked him—this has been more recent, you know—I asked him if he'd like to go to San Diego because I knew he loved San Diego, and I'd never seen it. So I say, "Would you like to go?" Because it was for two. "You can have your room, and I'll have my room." He was on the ninth floor, but I was on the second floor, and we just had the best time. And so, I called Dr. Armstrong to say that I'd be down there, and I'd like to see him, because I knew he had moved there. So, he said, "Yes, I'll meet you for lunch such and such a day."

So we were all ready to go and meet him, and the phone rang. It was his son, and he said, "My father's very ill. He can't have you for lunch today." And he died two days later. But he was nice. He was jolly, you know. He liked to do things. It was nothing to pick his wife up and go to Hawaii for a couple weeks.

For him I had to do like I always did for all of them. I had to do graduation lists and all the lists that he needed, and then I had to put the robes on at graduation—on the guys for their march in, their procession. I had a typewriter that would print a thousand letters off. You could type a thousand letters and envelopes and go home and have dinner, and they'd be done. System Six. Because there was so much. I did office work for him, just like the mailing and writing letters and typing letters and everything. Everything was fine.

Dr. Armstrong was always fine—jolly as could be—*loved* Hawaii. And they had to put the little dog in quarantine for a week before they could get him in. He had to be in the kennel for a week before they could take him to the hotel in Hawaii. [laughter] That didn't please Dr. Armstrong or his wife. She was a nice

person, and when they left here, they went back East. It was around Thanksgiving, and they were there with their four children, and they were ready to sit down to Thanksgiving dinner, and she had just put the turkey on, and she dropped dead. Oh, he was devastated. She had a heart attack at Thanksgiving dinner. Now, he just couldn't figure that out. I say, "Well, those things happen. And be real glad that she didn't have a stroke or something." You have to look at those things. She was a beautiful woman. He's a big man. So that was my life with him.

Dr. Neil Humphrey was the acting president from 1967 to 1968. He's a nice guy. He is a wonderful guy. Yes. I had a lot of dealings with him before he became acting president. Then he became chancellor and moved his office downtown. Bonnie went



Morrill Hall on the University of Nevada, Reno campus, 1966.

down with him. I'd go down if they needed extra work. Otherwise, I'd stay up here.

Alice Terry was a wonderful gal. She was my neighbor when I lived on Ryland Street. She lived in the corner house. She could see my back door, and I could see her. She was a wonderful person, and she took care of her mother till she was ninety something. She never got married or anything. But she was a nice person. She was really gifted. They were gifted with her, because she'd been here so long, and she knew about reputations and how people act and react.

She called me at the Elks Club, and she says, "Agnes, did anybody tell you that I'm going to retire?"

I say "No."

"Well," she says, "come up here Wednesday and have an interview with the president, and maybe you'll get the job." And I did. [laughter] She was a lovely person.

The next president was N. Edd Miller. He was a *doll*. He came, and he came not as president, but as chancellor first. So he made a trip to Las Vegas with all of us as a chancellor. [laughter] So then, you know, did I tell you there was only one plane going to Las Vegas? That's the only plane. You had to take it on Thursday noon. Everybody went, the president and everybody, all the secretaries and everybody on one plane! We had to leave at noon, and then we had to stay there until Sunday afternoon to come home. Hotter than . . . 128°, 130°. [laughter] So, we weathered that, and then when we came home, first thing Miller said to me, "Agnes, we're not going down there in that heat, anymore." He says, "That's terrible for you secretaries." Bonnie Spadoni was the head secretary then for the Board of Regents. We had to sit and work Saturday all day, and then Saturday night we had to type the minutes out, and then we were there all day Sunday. There was only one building. There was no place to get any food. You had to go back into Las Vegas from that one building. [laughter] Miller got up to me before we got on the plane to come home. He says, "This is the last trip you girls are going to have to make down here, because I am chancellor now, and I'm going to fix it." And he did, because as soon as he got us back in Reno he says, "Agnes, you don't have to go there anymore, but I want you to work with me as chancellor."

And I said, "OK."

He said, "Bonnie, you're not going down there, either. That is *terrible* that you girls have to go through that. They can get another chancellor for up there." And they did that.

So, the first graduation was here in Reno. Then, they would have to pack everything, all the robes and everything, and Count Dandini had this beautiful car. He would take them down for their commencement the next day in Las Vegas. That was murder to put those big things on there. Well, anyhow, then when they had the first commencement here, they had it in the old gymnasium. And the clothing wasn't sheer like it is now. It was heavy wool. So, everybody was sitting there, and poor Miller, he was swabbing his head all the time, and he took his coat off. He got up, and he says, "I don't care, you can all take your clothes off, because it's so damn hot!" [laughter] A lot of them got up and went out. He said, "I'm going to make you a promise right now. We're going to have to put up with it today, but the next commencement is going to be held out on the quad, that beautiful quad. *Why* are we sitting in here being drowned with sweat?" [laughter]

So Edd Miller started the tradition of graduation on the quad. It's beautiful to have it out there. But now it's so darn crowded, I don't know what they're going to do, unless they make more quad that way or this way. But he says, "There will never be another one as long as I'm president. I will *never* be in another building like that. I'm going to be on that beautiful quad." And he was on it all the time. Then he instigated lighter robes and things. "Why are we wearing this? We're not in the winter." [laughter] So, he got out everybody's size and what they had to have in the colors and everything. So that was the first year that everybody was comfortable in their new robes and things, because they were so light now. I don't know what they're made out of—silk or what they are. Before, you could hardly hold them to put them on, they were so heavy. Well, he got rid of that.

We went to Board of Regents meetings in Las Vegas, Elko, Fallon. We traveled with him. We girls had to leave and *everybody*! None of us ever thought of, "What if our plane crashed?"

But Albert said one time, "Honey, do you realize that all of you folks are on that one plane?" They only had one plane going. "And the president, everybody, all the administrators of the uni-

versity are on the plane, and you girls are on that plane, and all of you could crash in that airport. That would not be good."

Yes, well, we didn't do that anymore. We still traveled, but we had more planes. They had to go another day ahead, or a day behind, I don't know. That was something else. And Dr. Miller would laugh. Then, when he first arrived, he says, "Agnes, you've lived here all your life. Where can I find a house close to a train that goes by?" Well, there was some gambler, and I don't remember his name, but he had built this beautiful home on Canyon Drive, very beautiful brick home, and the train went right by it. And so then, all of a sudden the house was for sale for thirty-four thousand. And it was a gorgeous home, big home. It's still out there. But the man and his wife broke up, and that house was for sale. So, I don't know how I knew about it. Somebody in this area had told me that that house was for sale, if I knew anybody who wanted it. So, I told him about it, and he took it. He *loved* it. The train went right behind, right across there. [laughter] Whenever he had to go to a meeting for business at another college or anything, he would take the train ahead of time to be there. He wouldn't fly. He says, "Damn it, I'm not going to fly. I like the noise of the train, and I'm more comfortable. In the damn air, you can't hear yourself talk!" [laughter] He's really a nice man.

The students even put on a day for him, N. Edd Miller Day. Well, that was at six o'clock in the morning. We were all warned that everybody would be down at the gate, the band and everything, because he got up at six o'clock in the morning, and then he'd go to campus. Well, I followed him—though he didn't see me follow him—and when he got there they had the band, and they had everything you could think of—garbage cans to hit the lids and everything—to make all the noise they could. Dr. Miller said, "Oh, my God! They're doing something at this campus." They were doing things at universities all over the country, you know. Protests. "Oh," he thought, "Oh, I've got to go through that." Well, of course, everybody welcomed him, and he turned around, and he saw me there. He come around. He put his arms around me, "Did you know anything about this? And you did not tell me? You know you're my secretary. You should . . . you have to tell me!"

I said, "No, I wasn't supposed to tell you." Then, they had all kinds of stuff for him, and they had a red carpet from the car into the plane, because they had made arrangements to have Dr. Miller and his wife down in San Francisco for the weekend. And everybody had the red carpet, and all of us followed him out to the airport. But first, they had a big luncheon on campus. Lot of people—everybody on campus was at the luncheon. We were all involved.

And then when did the black people . . . ? That same thing. Protests. All the police cars and everything came and circled around the whole campus outside, because they had threatened . . . they wanted to have the Black Student Union, and they were fighting—they were really mad. Well, of course, then Dr. Miller says, "Now, you girls stay in here." He went over to . . . he knew there was trouble, and he said, "You stay in here, and I will call you and tell you when you can leave." Well, an hour later he says, "Everything's all right now. Cops are all here. The officers are here, and the blacks are gone. Now you can go home." That was all day long. Yes.

And then they had a protest on Governor's Day. They closed campus, and they were having trouble, you know, with activists that were against the war and everything and trying to say that you can't send the students into war. So Dr. Miller handled that, too. He came in, and he said, "What's next, Agnes? What do we do next?" Or to the other girl, he'd say, "You two girls, you just stay here. Just don't get in any of this mess." [laughter] He handled all that well, very well.

And when he went to Maine he said, "Now, be good, and always keep in touch with me, and I'll keep in touch with you." So we all kept in touch with him, and if he had a chance, why, he'd call us and see if everything was all right. He really liked his job here, but then his children went East, and that's why he took that job, to be close to them. Then, the kids moved here when he made this last move. So, I kept in touch with him, sent letters and everything, and he said, "Boy, I look forward to going home."

I said, "Well, are you going to go home?" He was from Houston, and I said, "Oh."

So, then he called me one day, and he said, “Agnes, would you do something for me?”

I said, “I’ve always told you I’d do anything you want me to do. What do you want me to do—have some more wars here or something?”

He said, “No, I want to know if my wife and daughter can come to Reno and stay with you for a couple weeks, maybe, to look for a house.”

I say, “Why? I thought you were going home.”

“I’m coming home. Reno is going to be my home.” Got a beautiful home, and it was some . . . I don’t know if it was Harrah’s. Some gambler’s wife, ex-wife, had that home, and it’s gorgeous, and it’s out on Manzanita . . . off of Manzanita Lane in a cul-de-sac, and there’s only one house here, and his is over here. A *beautiful* home. I’ve been up there for brunches and things, and, of course, when he came home, why, the children moved back to California. When his eightieth birthday came last year Moya Lear had the reception for him, and I saw a lot of people that had retired, and he was there for his eightieth birthday, and a lot of them had retired, but they were all there that day. I got to see them all. And Edd Miller was there, and I say, “How do you like your home?”

“Oh!” he says. “And my wife and daughter said, ‘Well, why can’t we get closer to Agnes, if we’re going to get that house?’”

He says, “You’ll be close enough to Agnes.” And then they took off to California! But they were here for his eightieth birthday—his children and the grandchildren were there. And, oh, he was so glad to see me there. And I had just gotten over my broken knee, so I was hobbling around. He says, “Now, who kicked you?” [laughter] He didn’t know that I’d fallen at the December commencement up at Lawlor Events Center. This man knocked me in the gutter, and I . . . then I become a gutter rat. I was going to my car, and I was on the curbside, and this man rushed by. All the people were just sauntering, going over to the cars. And this man went by. I was on the curb just ready to go across. He knocked me in the gutter and broke my kneecap in half. Thank goodness there was a lot of people there and got me to emergency. He never stopped or anything. So that’s why I was hobbling to Edd Miller’s

eightieth birthday. [laughter] He says, "Now, what did you do?" And I told him. He said, "Did he turn around? Did he apologize?"

I said, "No. But I know what a gutter rat is like." I'm healed up now. I've got all this metal in there, and I've got the screws and everything, and you can feel them. And so, the doctor here, he says . . . when I said, "Geez, why can't I get rid of this stuff?"

He says, "Do you wear short dresses?"

I say "No."

"Well," he says, "you know all those screws are holding the metal pieces that are holding your knee together." He says, "I can take them out, though."

I say, "No, you can't. I paid for them." [laughter] Did I tell you what my doctor wrote in my memory book? He was there, and he said, "Agnes, at least I can see you in one piece for a change." [laughter] Because I had the broken knee, and then I had the broken hip, and then I had the broken back. I never had a break all my life. Skiing or with horses and everything, you know, I never was hurt. That just broke my heart to have to be . . . *have* that there. Course, old age. Damned old age! And I played tennis, and I played golf, and I skied, and I worked the ranch and rode horses, and I broke horses, and I rode parades and everything. Never, *never* got hurt! Now, I've had three broken bones. [laughter] He is an *excellent* orthopedic doctor. He's a young man, but he is tops.

Edd Miller was at my retirement party, also. He gave me a big hug. He came over, and he said, "I'm going to have a hug."

And I said, "You go hug all you want." And he just squeezed me!

He said, "Keep in touch with us, Agnes." Mrs. Miller has been very nice to me, too. I've been over there for brunches and things. You know, I'm a people person. I'm not going to just live in this house. I'm going to keep contact with a lot of people. And they say, "Now, don't forget us. You know where to find us, and when you want company or want to do something, we're there." And I think that's nice to have that kind of friends.

When N. Edd Miller was chancellor, he said, "Now don't, Agnes, don't leave me. I'm going to be president. I want you." [laughter]

He's like Joe Crowley. You can sit, and you can say anything to him. And you . . . they're serious and wanting to know something; you're there listening, and they're appraising you for what you're doing. You don't have to do that, but a lot of those people could care less for their secretaries and things, now. But, no, I had good relations with all of the presidents that I came in contact with.

James T. Anderson was acting president for a year after Miller. He was a nice guy. Yes, he was a really nice guy. He had a big long table in his office—that's where he held all his meetings with the people. He said it was nicer to have them where they belonged when he was talking to them. All the presidents loved that office.

Jean Baldwin worked for the presidents a long time. She was a wonderful person. After Alice Terry left, she was secretary to the Board of Regents. And she had an eighty-three-year-old mother that she took care of, besides working. Lovely people. And the mother loved to gamble on Saturday, so she'd take her down to the Nugget or somewhere and take her to lunch and let her do some gambling and bring her back.

And they lived across the street from me when we lived off from Plumb Lane. It was off from Vassar, that section, where they're going to close that other street there, near Casazza and Apple. We had that whole area there, that whole block. And my neighbor, she was a physiotherapist, and she's from back East. My dad and my aunt and she died all in the same month, and Albert and I inherited all that property. But we had some of our own. And so we had fun, and the whole neighborhood—it was a block long—my dad fed all the food to them. [laughter] Albert made sauerkraut, and he'd give some cabbage seed. He imported the seed for his sauerkraut. I wish I knew the address. The cabbages would weigh sixteen pounds.

And then, we inherited my aunt's house, my dad's house—well, it was mine anyhow—and my neighbor's house, all at the same time. They died within a month of each other. My dad was ninety-two, my neighbor was ninety, and my aunt was eighty-nine. They all passed away the same month, so we got all that property. [laughter] And we didn't buy one stick of furniture for this house. We moved three houses in one day. And it was snowing on the last trip up here in March. And we have never bought

a stick of furniture for this house. What a day! And snow! Well, all the people in Albert's gun club came in with trucks and everything and moved it. And then, their wives came in that evening with all the dinner, because this was all set up. And then, when it came time to go, you couldn't see the end of the driveway. I said, "You better stay here. The beds are up, and I've got plenty of blankets and chesterfields."

"No, we're going to go to Washoe Valley." They called the next morning, and they said, "We should've taken you up on your offer. It took us twice as long to come home." It was such heavy snow. [laughter]

Max Milam became president in 1974. Well, he was something else. He wanted to be a big shot, and he just knew because he knew the big shots in the East. They were brothers and everything. Anyhow, he only carried a briefcase for this one man that he thought was real good. And that's all he was. He said that he worked for him. Well, then he was hired because he was friendly with this man, this wealthy family in the East. That's why he was hired here, thinking he was going to produce money. He never did. One day we saw something that said, "Max is Axed." Nine o'clock the regents were going to go and meet. And the bell started ringing, and the band was playing and everything. Well, anyhow, he didn't get very far, because he hired somebody—he wanted a fall guy for him, to do things for him, like a chancellor or something. So he hired him and paid him and everything and didn't have it approved by the Board of Regents or anything. So that's why he was axed.

I'll never forget that day. [laughter] Yes, the bells were ringing, and then they were having a bash of a time, and so we were called. It was all over. Well, we knew it was all over. It was all over with the ringing of the bell and everything, that he had been axed, and the newspaper come out. I've still got the newspaper, "Max is Axed."

And I've told you when I went over to my car? I thought, "Oh, I'm parked right next to him, I should say something." I said, "I'm sorry this happened."

"Well, you live by the sword, you die by the sword, don't you?" I jumped in my car, and away I went. [laughter] Well, I should have kept my mouth shut. But then, he had decided that he could

get a lot of support by having a meeting in the gymnasium. So, we were all given notice that he was going to talk that night. There was four of us in the place. He was all alone. And we were sitting up on the bleachers. That's all that showed up. He says, "I guess the crowd isn't coming, so good night, and thank you for coming."

He had a daughter become a veterinarian. He had two daughters. He had a very nice wife, charming wife, but he snubbed her every chance he had. She'd come to go to lunch or something with him, and she'd be sitting outside the door—there's a chair there. He wouldn't say, "Hello, you look nice," or nothing, just, "Come on!" Somebody talked to me like that, I'd have laid him flat, you know. [laughter] That's ridiculous.

No, he was not a good president. He never got along with the staff. He brought Shelba Gamble from Arkansas, or wherever he was from. He went back and hired Shelba to come out. She was married to an attorney, but they divorced. That's why she came here, but her mother still lives back there. She's got a darling little grandchild. She was at my retirement party with her daughter and her granddaughter. But Shelba was always nice to me. Well, we traveled together out there and everything, you know, to Board of Regents meetings. She'd go. Bonnie and Shelba and I—we were the three that were the secretaries.

She fit right in, and she was gracious to people. A lot of people didn't like her, I don't know why, because she was always there helping. When we had packages, those robes for the graduation down there in Las Vegas, she was always there helping us box them up and everything. And then to go to Las Vegas and then help us get them back home. She is retired now, you know. She did good work, and a lot of people liked her, and a lot of people didn't like her. That's all right—a lot of people don't like me, either. [laughter] But I have enough that like me!

I don't think Max Milam was good stuff for president. No, because he thought he was too good, and he did things that he shouldn't have done. That's why he got the ax.

Joe Crowley was the next president. And he is a prize one. Ah, Joe Crowley. When he was inaugurated, even his mother and his brother and everybody came. His brother wrote a letter. I have a copy of the letter that he wrote to him when he was having

the ceremony. He fit right in, he *really* did. And he *still* is a good president. I mean, he's not a president, but he's a good president. Well, then, on that day when he was inaugurated, why . . . not that day, it was about a week before, he said, "Now, when I become president, I'm going to rule with a hammer."

So, Agnes went down and bought the most beautiful hammer I could find, and I got red velvet, and I covered it. And so the day of his inauguration, I presented it to him, and it was still on his desk when he left. Going to rule with a hammer. [laughter] Joe Crowley had it in his hand on that day, and Miller said, "What do you have that thing for?"

"I'm going to rule with this red velvet hammer when I become president!" [laughter] So they bantered back and forth. You know, I've been here a long time, but I've enjoyed every minute of it, because it's always something interesting. No, I haven't regretted fifty years, fifty-three years here. Maybe I ought to try for some more!

With Joe Crowley I continued with the graduation robing and the correspondence and all that. And he'd loan me out, too. Like when they formed the foundation, he sent me over there, because I had that big typewriter that you put a thousand letters on and go home and come back, and they're all done, and the envelopes are done.

Well, when he applied for the presidency there were four hundred applications! Dr. Don Driggs said, "Agnes, what am I going to *do* with all these applications that have come in?"

I said, "Well, I guess you have to read them and copy them or something."

He said, "Would you work with me?" [laughter] I worked with him, and we took care of those four hundred applications. You know they're coming in, and you have to make copies and everything.

And I don't know, he retired from here. I never heard from him after he left here, and last year this man came in the office, and he'd asked where I was. I was upstairs there then, and he came in, and he said, "Do you know where Agnes is?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I want to talk to her."

And I said, "Well, who are you?"

And it was him, Dr. Driggs. And he came to Reno, and he said, "I'm going to look her up. I bet Agnes is still there. And she helped me with those four hundred applications." And that's when Crowley was selected as president.

I don't know how many applications they had for this president, Dr. Lilley. Well, we had a lot of fun writing those letters and getting them out. "Well, I got a whole stack, Agnes. You got to do them today." Of course, you had to do them everyday they came in.

He was a handsome guy. He was married though, Driggs. He was some teacher or something, I don't know what. He was on the faculty. He had a nice wife, and he was good looking. Oh, boy, he was good looking! But, you know, you meet people like that, and you think And then, course, when Joe Crowley got the job, he used him a lot for a lot of information, and guess who did all the letters that went out. Who put them out for the two of them? No, it has to be teamwork, and that's why I've enjoyed working here. Now, I'm a Virgo. Well, when I was that little girl, I was as independent as I am now.

Joe Crowley lent me out to the foundation, and I worked with Bob Eggleston. He was in development, and I knew a lot of people. Living in Reno, I knew a lot people that had money. Bob Eggleston said, "Now, Agnes, do you have any women friends that may be willing to contribute some money to the university?"

I said, "Yes, Ella Savitt." I knew her from the time she came to Reno.

And he said, "Well, will you get her together with us for lunch?" So, we went and had lunch. And they were going to have the medical school. Well, Bob Eggleston got acquainted with Ella, and he was going to get the money for things while her husband was alive, and he suggested that the medical school needed funds. She wanted to know what she could give to, if she decided to give. And that's what we sat and talked about with lunch, hour after hour. So, come down to it, when they decided on the medical school, she gave a million dollars, and her husband gave a million dollars. Her son gave a million dollars. Three million dollars to start the medical school.

And that's how I met Bob Eggleston. So, then, he said, "Will you be my secretary until I get more people that you know?" So,

I was going to lunch all the time with people that would donate to the university. You know the honor court, with all the names on the pillars? Ella Savitt is on every pillar. She's given millions, and she gives a million a year. She donates to a lot of places up here. Yes, we'd go, and, well, a lot of people from the campus here wanted to meet her, and one time she said, "Agnes, how many lunches do I have to go to?"

I say, "As many as you want to."

"Oh, keep them going. I'm having fun!"

She was at my retirement party, right by me. My cousin, Janice Escobar, went and picked her up, and she's ninety-six years old. Her name is on every pillar out there. But her son, he is a multi-millionaire. He is by himself now, and he lives back East. He has been all over the world, and he has books he writes, whatever they are. And he's a millionaire. He married a girl from Canada. And, oh, Ella had the most *gorgeous* home. Her father was in the paper business, delivering them in Chicago. He was from a foreign country, and I can't think of it. Anyhow, he distributed the newspaper—daily newspaper and magazines and things. He owned a business to supply the people that wanted those things in Chicago. So, then, he came out West to Los Angeles, and he still was a millionaire. So, then, they were in Los Angeles, and there were three girls. The older one didn't want any home or anything. The other one got married and lived in California. She's a beautiful girl. And Ella was the last one. She told her dad she wanted to use the chauffeur. And he said, "Where are you going?" This is in Los Angeles.

"I'm going to be interviewed for a job with seven attorneys."

"You are *not*."

"I am. I've got the appointment. I'm not going to sit around here like my other sisters. I know what I want." She is a little, feisty thing.

So, he says, "No, you can't have the chauffeur."

"Well," she says, "then I'll get a cab."

He says, "No, you won't. I'll go with you with the chauffeur." So he went with her. She was hired. Seven attorneys, and some of them were connected with attorneys in Reno. So, she got the job, and he became one of their best clients—her father—with all these attorneys. He became one of their best clients, so he was

happy to choose the connections. And she worked with those seven attorneys. She was office manager. She is a smart little gal.

Then her father built a home here for Ella and her husband—a million dollars. It's beautiful—out on Marsh Avenue. And he built one for the other daughter in California—million dollars. And the one in Los Angeles, he just built a home—million dollar home. *Gorgeous!* The swimming pool. The Marsh home is a beautiful home. Everything in needlepoint, everything. All her furniture, everything that you sit on or lay on, is needlepoint. Beautiful, and she did it all. I've got two pieces in my bedroom that she's done for me. And she's the one that taught me needlepoint. That's why all these chairs are needlepoint. Well, I was so enthusiastic, and in October she said, "Well, let's go and get some chair things to start with." That was in October. I had all of these done by Christmas. Every place I went I had one.

And Albert says, "What are you doing?" When I'd go to Gardnerville with him I was sitting there sewing, you know, doing needlepoint. He says, "Well, don't hit me with the needle." [laughter] So I was doing it all the way there and all the way back.

And my cousin Janice that was up here for the party, she lives down there in Salinas. Last year she says, "You know, Agnes, my dining room chairs could sure have some needlepoint put on them.

I say, "But I'm out of the needlepoint business."

"You wouldn't do six chairs or eight chairs for me?"

I say, "No, I won't. I've got all those chairs in there that I've done needlepoint, and my bedroom is full of needlepoint. Everything in the whole house is full of needlepoint. No." She can do that, she has time. Not that I wouldn't do it. I have done it, but I was so enthusiastic about it. I did needlepoint. All the needlepoint you see in this house, I've done. So I think I've done my share. [laughter]

I was secretary of the University Club when it first started, and then as it expanded, why, they got the other ones in. Alice Hansen took over. She just died not long ago. I would go with them on the University Club trips, you know, as a member, but I'm not anymore. I'm away from there, and Alice wasn't there, and the trips they're having now are not interesting. No, it's not any fun, not to me. I don't know if they're still going to have it or

what, but I withdrew from it. Well, because, you know, you can do just so much, and I don't drive anymore, and so I just had enough of the University Club. But they're nice, they're nice people, but they've gotten so many members now that are not just Reno, and they're around the university. They're just members that have gotten married and wanted to go on tours and things, which I'm not crazy about some of the tours—go down to California and go to musicians' deal, and you sit under tents and everything in the summer. [laughter] I'm a Virgo. Then you have to always stop at the . . . what is that place in between here and California? They stop for pies and stuff on the way, always had to stop there. And, well, you kind of outlive those things. But it was nice when they started.



This is my philosophy of work. It's from a paper I did for Joe Crowley one time about my position. It hasn't changed. I still believe it. [reading] "My philosophy of work in general is to find a job you like and learn all the aspects of the job so that you can work efficiently in your own capacity and develop a good working relationship with other employees, and learn their jobs so you can help out when needed. The priority requisite of your job is loyalty to your boss in taking care of his appointment calendar, his telephone calls, office visitors, and work requests. Good communication with your boss is very important, so that you feel comfortable about discussing office matters and work schedules with him and any questions you might have about specific tasks he asks you to do. Be punctual and work diligently during your work hours and accomplish all you can. If you have deadlines to meet and find that you cannot get it done before quitting time, then don't hesitate to stay overtime and get the job done. Strive for perfection in all phases of your work at all times. Be well groomed at all times, and well dressed to create the appearance of a career woman. When you get telephone calls or visitors come into the office, be polite and helpful. Always be ready to offer assistance in any way you can to make people feel welcome. To get a job done you need teamwork, and I am glad to be a team member."

That's my philosophy. Oh, Joe Crowley was thrilled to death with it. You work for so many different people at a college like

that, you know? But look at the presidents I worked with. Thirteen.

I think the work ethic has changed, though. There's too much leniency there, and too much of the people that have the job want to be number one. That's what I've found. I was dedicated to my job. They aren't dedicated nowadays. All they want is communication with certain people, and those certain people shouldn't be there because of the fact that they're not working for them, but they're in there visiting with them. You know, some are going to tell me that it's their own business. But, no, I was glad I could retire. Well, and I had time. I thought it was time for somebody else to have the job. But I enjoyed all fifty-three years. The university is wonderful. It's wonderful. That's why I stayed there for so long. Yes.

GROWING UP ON THE RANCH

I WAS BORN in Battle Mountain, Nevada, on September 4, 1916. My dad was county commissioner of Lander County for a long time. I was born in the morning. I don't know, I think it was around eight o'clock or something, but he had a meeting to go to that night with all the commissioners, and he told them, "Oh, I've got a new daughter."

And they said, "What's her name?"

"Agnes."

"Well, what's her middle name?"

"We haven't got a middle name."

"OK, you go sit down." This is the way my dad told it. They all got in a circle, and they came back, and they said, "We've got your daughter's middle name for you."

He says, "You have?" You'd like my father. [laughter] He says, "Well, all right. Let's hear it."

"Lander, because you've been here, Lander County, for so long. We think Lander would be pretty." My dad was in *heaven*. He couldn't *wait* to get home to tell mother that he had the name. A lot of people aren't named after a county. [laughter]

My father was born in Battle Mountain, October 19, 1879. He lived to be ninety-two. His father died when he was ten years old. Mrs. Lemaire was the school teacher. In those days they lived



Agnes in 1916.

with the family. So my dad got this ranch and wanted it just like Molly Knudtsen. She was married to Magee. My dad bought a ranch from Magee's father between Austin and Battle Mountain. Well, his mother remarried. So then, he took his stepfather in to help him with the ranch work. And then his mother—I don't know how many children she had from the first marriage—but my dad had five brothers and three sisters, so that was their family. When my father was born he weighed thirteen

pounds. His mother wound up having, altogether in her lifetime, thirteen children. But he weighed thirteen pounds when he was born. [laughter] My dad lived to be ninety-two, and he only went to the hospital twice in his life! Once was to have his appendix out. The Dr. Hoods—they were father and son—but the father did the appendix operation. And that's when my dad moved here to Reno. The second time was when he was eighty years old. He was out at the ranch breaking a new horse for me, and I was out there watching him, and I said, "Dad, you better put a halter on or something. That horse is a young one."

"It's all right. I'll get up on her. I'll get her by her mane, and I'll get on her."

Well, he had got on her, and she reared back, and, of course, no saddle or anything, so he just slid down. I ran in the house and told my mother to call the hospital and have the doctor there, and we would take him down to the hospital. So we took him in. The doctor always called him "Smitty." His name is Schmith. He checked him, and he said, "Well, Smitty, you're going to be here a while. You've got the blood clot in your lung."

He says, "You want to bet?" He was out training a horse the next day! Eighty years old! And he didn't give up the horse until

he had her trained. [laughter] Never went to the hospital again! The blood clot didn't hurt him. He lived to be ninety-two years old. He died in 1971.

My mother's name was Emma Swindlehurst. She was born in Utah. She met my dad in Battle Mountain. My dad's brother and his wife had a boardinghouse in Battle Mountain, and when my dad came from the ranch with a shipment of cattle, why, he'd go over and board there just for the shipment out the next morning. And here was this beautiful, young woman—my mother. So, they'd be visiting

and everything, and then he'd go back to the ranch after the shipment. Then he'd get in some more cattle, and he always was able to stay there overnight—go over there and have his night meal and stay overnight, to be shipping out early in the morning. Well, she was always nice to him, always talking to him and wanted to know about him and everything. So then, the shipments kept going, and he kept going.

My mother wanted to be a nurse. She had all the papers in Salt Lake all played out for her, but her mother said, "You're not going to be a nurse, because you're going to stay here and help me raise these kids." She had eight children.

So, it became a love affair. Oh, her mother said, "I'll never approve you. I'll never approve it, and it has to be approved by the father and the mother, if you're going to get anywhere for a wedding."

My mother said, "I'm going to marry him. I don't care if you approve or not."

"You can't be married until we approve." Now, that's my background.



Mathias J. Schmith, Agnes's father, as a young man in Austin, Nevada.

So, the father was all for them. Oh, he adored him.

My mother said, “OK, I’m not going to be a nurse, and I’m not going to stay here. I’m going to marry him.”

Her mother said, “I’ll never approve it. I’ll never approve. You’re going to stay here.”

“No,” she said, “I’m not.” So they came to Reno and got married. And she never did approve my dad. *Never*. Never accepted him. To his dying day she never accepted him.

That’s rude. That’s . . . I even hate to talk about it, because it was so unfair. He was a *wonderful* husband. He *loved* my mom. He was *crazy* about her. And why shouldn’t she get married if she couldn’t be a nurse? Well, then, when she got married, she was living in Battle Mountain, and she was going around taking care of sick people and helping women have babies and things—doing nurse work—because she wanted it. Anyhow, she wasn’t taking nursing, but she helped all these people. She had a midwife when I was delivered. There was only one doctor in Battle Mountain. [laughter]

When I was about a year and a half old we moved to Reno. My dad ran his stepfather’s ranch here. It was eighty-nine acres right on that corner where Vassar went into Kietzke. The ranch went up Kietzke Lane all the way to Plumb Lane. Little Flower Church



“My dad’s brother and his wife had a boardinghouse in Battle Mountain.”



Agnes with her mother, Emma Swindlehurst Schmith, and her puppy.

bought the last six acres from my dad, and that's where they put the church. On that whole area was the ranch.

My dad had cows. He'd go on cattle drives. He had horses, and he had skunks. [laughter] They made the best pets. Well, he had a way of putting them in a boot and taking a thing where the stink was. He'd get them when they were little, and then he'd operate on them, and they made the best pets. They were gorgeous. Oh, the last mother had eleven. He had it all taken care of so you never smelled them. They could be around the house and everything. My dad had names for them. I had more interest in my dogs and my horses, but I petted the skunks. I helped him with the skunks. They made beautiful pets, like cats. They're very, very determined to be with their young ones. They look at you, and you don't know whether you should pick one up or not, because their claws are out. But we never had any trouble with them.

Then, my little pigs! My dad always told me never to get in a place where there's a sow that has babies. They could kill you, those big sows. And they protect. Well, this one time, I didn't get

to go on the cattle drive, and my heart was broken. *Always* I was with my dad with the horse. When I was little, I was in front of him, and he had one arm around me and one guiding the horse, and I was just an infant. So then, on this one day, I couldn't go on the cattle drive, and I wanted to go, because all the cowboys were going, too, you know, and it was a big deal and a lot of cows. Dad always called me Tid. He said, "Tid, that's going to be a long drive. We may not come back until tomorrow, and we're going to be riding a long distance."

I said, "I want to go."

Well, the sow had six little pigs in the pen. My dad said, "Now, I know you love those pigs, but don't go in there when the sow's there."

"OK."

So, he hugged me, and he said, "I'm sorry, but when I come home tomorrow, I will take you where we went today, so you'll know where the cows are." But I couldn't go *that* day. So, he hugged me, and he said, "Now, be good, and if anything happens, you call Jack House," because he was the head cowboy. Jack House would stay if they thought they were going to be overnight, because he didn't want my mother and I to be alone. So, he was the head cowboy, the first one my dad had.

So Jack said, "Well, I'll stay with the ladies." That didn't set real well with me, either, because I knew definitely I wasn't going! [laughter]

So, I watched, and there was a new, young cowboy that Dad had hired, and he had a wife, and he stayed in one of the houses that my dad had cowboys in. He went with them, and so I was watching what way they went, and I saw dust around the ranch. And my dad had seen it, too. So, he thought, "Well, somebody's on the ranch. I better go back and see." And it was this young cowboy. His wife and the baby were there, but he was with one of the cowboys. Jack House was going to watch the baby and her.

Well, I went over to the pigpen, and here was a little pig right by the fence that I could pull up without getting near the sow. He was squealing, and I was loving him. My dad knew. He says, "Tid, I told you not to get there. I could have come back here, and the sow could have been *eating* you." They are very protective. But I had the little pig, so he took the little pig. "Now," he said, "don't

do it anymore. When I come home, I don't care if it's midnight, I will get a little pig, and I will sit out there and let you love him." [laughter] And a squealing all over the place!

"OK, Dad. I won't go in there. I won't do that." So, I didn't touch the little pig.

Dad got home about midnight. He says, "Tid, you want to go for the little pig?"

I say, "I'm sound asleep!"

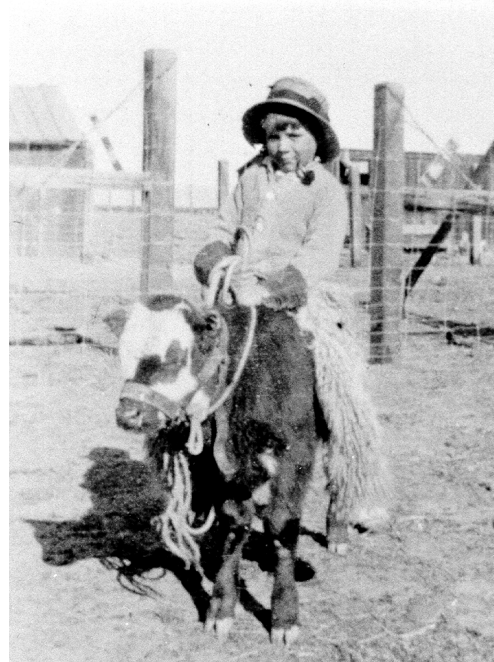
My dad never, *never, never* spanked me. He would sit and tell me what's best, the best way to do things, and, of course, little, snout-nosed kid would go and do it her way. [laughter] So, I didn't ever do that with the pig again. When we had little pigs, we'd spend almost a whole day sitting out on a tree stump with a little pig, and I was loving the little pig. [laughter]

Well, the same day that I had the little pig, we had a billy goat, and he butted you. My dad said, "Now, leave the billy goat alone." Well, I couldn't have a little pig after he left. Jack House was sitting up by their house, the cowboys' home, and he's watching me. So, I went down and climbed over the fence into where the goat was. I got up, and I was going over the fence, and he butted me *over* the fence! Wouldn't you like to have a picture of that? [laughter] So, I went over the fence, him traveling right with me! Jack House came running down, "Are you all right? Are you all right? What's your name? Tid?"

"Yes, I'm Tid."

He come and picked me up, and he says, "I don't think your dad's going to like that."

I say, "Oh, he'll be all right." [laughter] That's what kids nowadays miss of



Agnes and a calf on the ranch in Reno.

living on a farm and with animals. You form your *own* likes and dislikes.

Well, one place I never, never would go—my dad had two big bulls, and he had a big bull pen. And never. Now, he would go in there with them, but us kids never, never went near them. They had a good stockade and everything. He said, “Don’t climb up there thinking you’re going to get in there now, because then you’ll fall, and then *they’ll* eat you.” Oh, they could fight, especially if they’re in heat. And so I had bulls and pigs. I had sheep. I think there’s a picture of all these lambs that I was feeding. I’m in the middle of them, and, here, they’re all around me with the bottles, eating. And my dad would have all these spare bottles, and he had to get the nipples, and I was fixing the bottles and the nipples and putting the milk in the bottles.

Another chore I had was I had to pile it. We had to clean the barns through the windows with all the manure, and my dad would say, “This is ‘pile it’ day, Tid.” It was “pile it” day. We had a pile of manure coming out the window. [laughter] Yes, that was my job. It’s “pile it day” today. You can pile it anywhere. You could throw it through the window first from out of the barn, and then you pile it here, pile it there, and then you go get a truck and pile it some more! [laughter] We had to keep that ranch spotless. There was a place for the manure out where they had the alfalfa. Then you had big alfalfa in the summer, but you used manure for it.

I fed the horses, cows, and any other animals that were on the ranch. They ate hay. They all had their own place. They had places where they ate, and it was all closed in. I filled the racks where you put the hay. They were protected in the barn. They had the outside if it was good weather, but they were protected.

They had only one veterinarian in Reno, and my dad had to doctor a horse if it got in the wires or anything. We were very particular about that, though. We would not put a horse or cows where there were dangerous wires. My dad always built a board way. If they were in this corral, and there were things to eat out of there, Dad had a wooden fence between the wire fence, so they wouldn’t get caught in the wire.

Then I had one little lamb. Her name was Marie. I had them all named. One of the cowboys came in and, “Oh, Mrs. Schmith!

Schmith! Schmith! Schmith! Schmith! I got a lamb here. Rattlesnakes bit it!" Yes, little lamb and on the front leg.

Well, my mother said, "Come, help me." So I went and helped her. She went to the place where we kept the meats and stuff, got a whole package of ham, and she put that ham on that little lamb's front foot, the front leg. She used the whole thing because it would come off green, bringing the poison out. It was solid green, and so she



"Then I had one little lamb. Her name was Marie."

kept putting that on, even at night, on that little leg. She used the *whole* package of ham. Now, people nowadays wouldn't put ham on something like that. They wouldn't know what to do. Well, my mother knew. She wanted to be a nurse, and her mother wouldn't let her, but she was the best nurse to animals and things. That little lamb never lost his leg, and my mother had the ham on until it didn't have any more green on it. That little lamb followed my mother every place she went—in the house, out of the house, into the outhouse and everything. See that? Animals are not dumb. Now, she knew her life was saved, and she had a lot of care with mother. Well, I'd be there helping mother, but, oh, no, she was following mother. She'd even go with mother in the bedroom. Yes, my dad and mother let the little lamb in, and mother fixed it a little bed in their room, so she could be there with them.

And you tell kids nowadays. "Oh, we wouldn't have those damn things," the animals. "We wouldn't have them—no way." They were as dear to you as your dogs are now.

Groomers came and sheared the sheep. That's fun to watch. Well, they had a way . . . I think they hypnotized those animals. They *never* moved. And those men were so precious with them. When they get all through grooming them and everything, and

the wool was going, they'd stand there and say, "Oh, we hate to see them go." You know? We kept a lot of sheep on the ranch. I fed them. Hay and grass. Alfalfa.

I milked six cows—six cows every morning before I went to school. And when I'd come home from school, I had the same six to milk. Those were my cows. I was up at four o'clock in the morning getting the milk before I went to school. I had them all named. I had them all named, but I did the milking. Well, later years, my dad had a machine. But, no, when I was growing up, no. I had the bucket between my legs, and I'd go back and forth. And then I'd steal a cup of warm milk, and that's why I'm so healthy. I'd drink it. Warm milk. Well, my dad had his cows tested, so they were healthy cows. They'd turn around and look at you like, "What you doing now? Why you pulling me?" [laughter]

You know, I've had a wonderful life. I enjoyed every minute of it. From the time I was born I was a problem, you know? Getting my name and everything. But, anyhow, you *learn* how smart animals are and how *loving* they are. Yes, you bring a brand new bull. My dad would walk around and let me pet him, and he bought big, big bulls. He had a big place, a nice place to keep them and everything. He said, "All right, now, pet the bull." And I wasn't afraid. But I was told not to ever go in there with him, which I knew, and I never did, and I never climbed the stockade to go in. But whenever he had anything to get out of there, he always let me come and pet him.

I also had to go down and *cut* the hay. It was a machine, piece of machinery. With horses. [laughter] I had the horse. They would be in the big wagon out in the field. So it comes in, and it has this great big derrick that you could pull the hay out of the big wagon and put it in the stack. Well, my job was the derrick that you put the hay in, and it lifted the hay and put it on the back of the wagon. But I had the big fork that took the hay out of that, and I was on the horse. I'd have to put it on top of the stack. Take the horse over there and put it over there. The horse would go . . . I'd have the big fork, and I'd take it over where the stack was, and it could be raised, and then they found a way of me going on something that they could push a button, and I could put the horse on there, and I'd be putting it on top of the stack, and the

horse was ahead of me. One day I thought, "Oh, I've worked all day on this stack."

At that time, we didn't know what a bale of hay was. Well, I had worked all day on that stack, and the men were sitting outside having lunch, and they said, "Come on kids, let's have some lunch. You got a lot more hay to haul. Come and have lunch with us."

Well, I didn't. I just was right there and riding on the stack, and then I got it all done. I said, "I'm going to go slide down a stack." Jack House was still over there. My dad was somewhere. I didn't know where he was, and as the last one was emptied, I thought, "Hmmm, I'll leave the horse here, and I'm going to slide off a stack." So I slid off a stack.

Dad had gone up and got the horse and took him down while I was preparing to go off, because I was going to get the horse down, you know? He said, "Tid."

I said, "Oh, that was fun going off a hay stack."

Dad said, "Look at all the hay that followed you. So, we're going to put the horse back, and you're going to go up there and put the hay back."

He never got mad at me, but that's how he would treat me. I respected him so much. We never did have trouble. Never did.



"At that time, we didn't know what a bale of hay was."

He never lifted a hand to spank me. Always, “Tid, we do it this way. We do it that way” or, “We don’t do it.” Now, a lot of fathers aren’t like that.

My dad worked real *hard* on that ranch. He had a lot to do with the cows. He had to brand the calves and cut the . . . what did they do? Like we get a hysterectomy, they take that thing out, unless they’re going to breed them again. They never attacked anybody. I helped brand them. Even went one time with my dad to a branding on a ranch that’s noted in Battle Mountain for being the biggest ranch and having the most calves. My dad wanted to go to it, so we went up—mother and I. I helped Dad with the calves. I’d hold them while he reared them up, and then we’d brand the calves.

The brand in Battle Mountain was a symbol of the ranch. Reno was the Jacobi Ranch. Then it became Schmith Ranch. See, my dad’s mother married Jacobi after her first husband passed away. Jacobi run the ranch between Battle Mountain and Austin. My dad owned that ranch. So then, my dad’s dad passed away, and his mother remarried a couple years later, and that was Jacobi.

I helped my mother cook. That’s where I learned to cook. Thirty-five cowboys and four in the family. I learned to cook, and we grew all those vegetables and things on the ranch. I had a job



Draft horses used for work on the ranch, 1933.

doing that, too. [laughter] Mother made her own bread. You couldn't go to the bakery. There were no bakeries. She would set the bread at four o'clock in the morning for lunch and dinner. She'd have doughnuts and things that she would fix in the morning for the morning meal. Doughnuts and all kinds of goodies. Of course, nothing much left after the men ate. Then, she'd fix lunch, and she'd take the chuck wagon a lot of times on cattle drives. They were well fed, and they adored my father. They respected the whole family.

My mother had little cake pans and everything for kids' cooking. I had to stand on the stool to reach the counter, but she had all these little utensils, and she'd say, "All right, now, I'm making a pie, a peach pie. Here comes the dough and the peaches." And I had to put them in the little pans, and then I had to copy her—what she was doing. And loaves of bread—I made little loaves of bread. I followed her. I mean she taught me everything she was cooking. And if I could use a bigger thing as I was growing up, why, then I was right at the table with her. But when I was growing, just toddling, practically, that's where I started to learn to cook.

I didn't live in Battle Mountain very long. I was a year and half old when we moved to Reno, but I have a lot of memories of Battle Mountain, because I kept going there after I grew up. I would spend most of the summer up there, because my uncle had horses I could ride. Half the time my dad was up there helping him with cows and stuff, so I spent a lot of time in Battle Mountain with my aunt and uncle. the summer up there, because my uncle had horses I could ride. Half the time my dad was up there helping him with cows and stuff, so I spent a lot of time in Battle Mountain with my aunt and uncle.

My brother's name was Louis Wilford Schmith. He was not . . . well, you can see the pictures. Well, my folks loved him, and he didn't treat them right. My dad would say, "Come and help us."

"No."

But my dad wouldn't spank him. He'd say, "Thank you. Some day you're going to be sorry. You won't have a father." But he'd be parading on a horse. We used to ride horses to school. They had a barn at school, then hay and everything for them, and troughs.



Agnes with her brother, Louis Wilford Schmith.

Louis would disappear. He'd be riding away and back in the mountains. That was to get away from my dad and work on the ranch. He regretted it later.

I started at Miss Beck's school in Reno. My dad had taught me how to write Spenserian. Do you know what that is? That's what the court reporters used to do when they were in court, and it's a beautiful handwriting. My dad could do it. I still got his pens. He kept me busy with the pens. So, first day of school, we go in, and here's Miss Beck, and she says,

"Could you sign your name here?" I signed my name. She says, "Is that your handwriting?"

I said, "Yes."

My dad said, "I taught her that." Now, for a first grader this was uncommon. But the Spenserian writing is gorgeous. It's very filigreed, you know? And my dad taught me that.

Miss Beck said, "I've never known a first grader that could write that way."

He said, "Well, she's writing that way. Is she acceptable?"

"Well, of course, she's acceptable, but she's going to make some other students take some notes." It's beautiful writing.

Miss Beck's was a one-room schoolhouse with about, maybe, ten children. When we lived in Portola, we had six grades in one schoolhouse. I went to Beckwourth and Portola.

There were three ranches owned by a Mr. Humphrey, and they wanted to do business or go on trips, so they'd hire my father for the summer. We'd live out of Portola seventeen miles. We lived right in Beckwourth when we were there. The third ranch was over that way. Anyhow, he'd take care of the ranches, and we'd move there and live there.

Well, that school in Beckwourth, it was a riot. It was . . . no, that was the nice one. It was on a hillside. It's still there. Well, they had a big farm house and a lot of cows and one school—six grades. Across the street there was a Mexican family and a black family. We always had to take a lunch, except on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Tuesday, the black woman would have all us students over for Southern dinner at lunchtime. She fed the whole school. The Mexican family would have it on Thursday. Tuesday here and Thursday there. We had a big lunch, and the Southerners, you know, they were good for chicken and everything, so we had hot lunches. Oh, they just *loved* us kids. And the little Mexican boy—my brother got in trouble when the Mexican pulled a knife on him and says, “I’ll fix you.” And so my brother climbed to the top of the swings. [laughter] He didn’t bother him anymore. They were friends.

There was one black girl. Josie her name was. And we had to put on school performances and things for different holidays. We had to put on Christmas entertainment in Portola, and we all had to be dressed for Christmas. Well, then Josie—I’ll never forget it—everybody was in stitches when she came out. She was all powdered up with flour to be white. She was Christ! They laughed through the whole play. [laughter] Tall and black skin! Everybody was standing there just roaring. I was in a paper costume with birds on it. I was just one of the guests or something. But she was Christ. And these people got up and clapped and everything. And she fitted in just like she did it all the time. [laughter] Josie really loved me, because they had a slide at the school, and I was always sliding down and tearing my dress. So she’d take me over, and she’d fix my dress. Those were the days for kids being treated. There was no kid getting in trouble, never. But I’ll tell you about the black girl. I kept in touch with her even though she left. We broke up in school and everything, but we kept in touch with letters for years. And then, all of a sudden, I got a letter saying she had passed away. We kept in touch all that time.

In those little country schools, we learned a lot. And you learned them well. The teachers usually lived with the family. When we moved to the ranch between Battle Mountain and Austin, one of the Lemaires was a school teacher, and she lived with us. Yes, the schoolteacher lived with them for whole semesters.

They were hired, but they didn't have to find a place to live; they lived with the family. The Lemaire family was very prominent in Battle Mountain. He owned a grocery store, and, oh, he had something to do with the state and all that—a very lovely family.

I remember the teachers caught me doing things. I'd break school every once in a while. I'd get caught. I was looking at a horse. [laughter] No, I was a good student. I was an A-plus student. I was going to Mount Rose School before we went to those other three ranches, and Mrs. Towles was the teacher, and we had all kinds of names for her—"Toeless" and all of that, and I got caught.

Country schools are fun. We could ride horseback to school. They had a barn to keep them. When it snowed we always had some kind of a thing that you could plow it out.

One time we had thirty-six inches out at this ranch. My dad had a tunnel to get to the barn to feed the animals, and that was when they had all the planes hauling feed. They had planes for Gardnerville and everywhere where they had cattle. They had thirty-six feet of snow—not inches—thirty-six feet of snow that year. My dad woke up in the morning, and here the cows were out, about that high, but he got some of the cowboys to help make a path to them.

Well, you had the machinery that you could take to plow the roads, and you always had something the horses could be attached to if you couldn't get a car there. We had a sleigh. My dad had a beautiful sleigh. He'd take all the neighborhood kids for sleigh rides.

Christmas was a holiday, and you couldn't go to the grocery store; you couldn't get bread. That all had to be done at home. There were no grocery stores like we have now. Well, you could get the groceries, but to get bread, you couldn't run to the Raley's and get bread. It was all done at home. So my mother, I guess she was having a lot of fun with Christmas, so she put on big boots and went out and told us to go in the bedroom. Well, then she acted like Santa Claus with those big boots. [laughter] And you know, we slept not on mattresses, not like today. These were filled with like hay. Straw. Straw mattresses. You even had covers over it. You could put straw in there and keep you warm, and your mattresses were straw. And you were glad to have them.

And then we had gas lights. No electricity and no coal. You had to have tree stumps all chopped up to cook with.

The cowboys helped my dad with the wood chopping. Those cowboys never wanted to leave my dad. Jack House was the first one he had, and when my dad discontinued ranching, he came. I don't know where he was living. He knew where my dad's ranch was here. He came and asked if he could spend a week with us. He says, "I've missed you so much. I've been looking at a few places, and I'm not satisfied with any of them. Could I stay here and work for you?"

Well, my dad says, "My stepfather is running the ranch now." We were living in town. He came over and dad told him where to come, and he spent two weeks with us, and that man just sobbed all the time he was there, because he knew he was going to have to leave Daddy. He got a good job with the Humphrey ranches that my dad was running, you know? He was with us for years, and then he left. Didn't have any family. We were his family, and he'd do *anything* in the world for us. He idolized my mother to death—my mother and I and my brother. My brother wasn't friendly with anybody, so you can't really talk him into doing anything. So he'd leave him alone. But he idolized my dad. He would have died for my dad. And he left after Dad sold that ranch out there. He came over one day, and he was living in California, and he was sick. And he says, "Well, I have a friend, and I've got your address, and he'll let you know when I pass away." You know, that brings the tears to you to know that that one was so dedicated. They aren't dedicated like that—not in this day. I'm dedicated to the university, but people, even on ranches now, don't last very long.

Well, there's not a lot of ranches. And as we keep building here, there's not going to be any ground for ranches. And you're not going to have all those vegetables and everything. We had *acres* of vegetables. And I was there to help with that. [laughter] I milked cows, and I branded calves. I worked in the potatoes. My dad had a potato section of the ranch, and I had to go up there and see that the cows were not eating all the potatoes. When it was potato time, I just had my horse and a cowboy ahead of me, and my horse had bags of potatoes for him to plant.

You know, somebody's going to read this, and they're not going to believe all this story. You have to live it. I'm glad I've been able to live as happily as I have.

Oh, yes. Joe Crowley—he says, “Are you still working on that book?”

“I'm going to work on it until it's done.”

“Well,” he says, “I'm anxious to see where you come from.”

I said, “I came from my mother.” [laughter]

Yes, well, my childhood, I can compare with my life at the university, because I had a very happy childhood, and I had a very happy connection up at the university. I'm glad I had the opportunity that many years. That was something. Yes. 1938.

I went to Reno High. I knew the Billinghursts. I lived on the corner of Plumas and Urban, where Washoe Golf Course is now. And the golf course was an airfield. Airplanes could land there—just mail planes and things. So we had a nice home there. My friend Sally's father was Wade Wine, and he was a contractor. Sally was his daughter, and he had a beautiful wife. Her name was Emma, and she was from back East. And I went back with their daughter. Her name was Jean Wine, but her father called her Sally. There was a vacant lot out on Plumas Street between our house and their house. So, Raymond Waltz—the Waltz family owned a big ranch down off of Plumas. It was the Waltz ranch. Well, we had fun there. The teacher lived right on Plumas Street there. And we got friendly with the family, and we could go down to the Waltz place when it was snowing, and we had Neil Plath and Harry Plath and Alice Plath and Agnes and my brother and Sally, and we'd take sleds. We would go down the hill on those sleds, and I was always on the bottom, because I was the biggest one. [laughter] I was always the first one on, and then they all piled on top of me, and we'd go over that bump. Then I had to pull my sled back. They wouldn't. They'd bring their sleds back, and I had to bring mine to get back. I was always . . . well, I was fat, you know.

They only brought noted people to the airport, and they'd go to Idlewild to talk. Lindbergh was there, and the man at the airfield says, “Now, you kids, all of you be here early tomorrow morning, because Lindbergh's going to come in an hour earlier than the public thinks he's coming in. He's going out to Idlewild to talk.” So, we were all there to welcome him. I have a picture of

that somewhere. Then, he was going to leave the next day, and they said, "He's leaving an hour before, and you kids be there." And that's when we got the picture of him in the plane. It was Neil Plath and Alice Plath and Harry Plath and my brother and Sally and I. We were all the kids that could tell him goodbye. Well, we had a lot of fun then with that deal.

In high school I played basketball. Well, I played a lot of things there. Volleyball. Oh, I was a star in volleyball. I was so fat and big. And we played all kinds of sports. Everything that they offered, I was in. Everything was fun. I weighed 185, and I had boobs size forty-seven. [laughter] I did all the sports and passed all my grades. I was very active. I passed three foreign languages. I got A's in them. And accounting and secretarial work, and, of course, I participated in all their activities, which was fun.

Homecoming every year. Most of the time I rode horseback. You've seen me on horses. I'd be in the parades with my father. That time they didn't have all mechanized floats like they have now. It was by horse and wagon for floats and things. I think now that their homecoming is awful. We used to have so much fun making the floats and having breakfast and being in the parade and everything, and we went clear down from, oh, way down



"I'd be in the parades with my father." Harold Club float in the Reno Rodeo Parade, with Agnes's father driving the team, 1946.



Agnes and her friends riding in downtown Reno, 1945.

Virginia Street to beyond the Mapes. We went clear down to Ryland and High Street, or something, and got the floats all lined up and everything, and then we'd get in the parade to come up the main drag, Virginia Street, the whole way. Now, they have it up at Sixth Street, but then you went clear up town. Oh, they used to have several bands and everything. Beautiful pictures and beautiful horses and everything. And then we'd wind way up to the end there, and then we would have lunch, and then we could split up and go home. But that parade was clear from Mill Street. Yes. In that area is where the floats were all taken care of. And then we'd get to Virginia Street, and that's when we'd go clear up on campus, and the cops were all along there. But now, they're on Sixth Street, and no horses or anything in it. No band. They used to have bands from all the schools and everything. And, you know, when you grow up with that, and then you . . . suddenly, you get older and it's bang. It is.

Now, they're fighting about the parade in Carson. They weren't going to even have a float this year. Now, why can people change that fast? Oh, and all the teachers and everything just was . . . all the activity was going on, and everything was accomplished. But now, there's nothing. I used to go to all the homecoming deals,

riding my horse, and I'd get all set up. I helped them with all their floats and everything, and then I'd go in the parade, which was long at that time. The other kids were thrilled to death. They'd go right along and just work their butt off. We would go, and we'd work day and night to get the floats ready for the parade. And now, you don't even notice if they're even making one. Why do they change like that? I don't know if it's the professors, or they don't know the story of the days that people like me know about them. So it's too bad, because then there were so many people, the cops were keeping all the people back from the parade. And the bands, my gosh. Four or five marching bands and everything else.

We had a lot of fun at high school graduation. [laughter] Yes, the teachers and everybody and parents and everything came out and celebrated with us. We weren't just strangers. They'd have a dinner for us, and then whatever awards was given, that was



Agnes's graduation portrait, Reno High School, 1935.

given then, not at graduation. It was a graduation dinner. But now the university does it on commencement day. Gives out all the . . . whatever they want to give away.

After high school, I went to Reno Business College. I learned accounting, and I had to do 126 times for my ABC machine. 126 on the typewriter. And you did it by records. Then you had the speed records and things that you had to follow. I passed all that. No, I passed with good grades.

Then, I went to work. When I was still in high

school the man at the Elks Club, Cliff Kumle, said, "When you graduate, your job is waiting for you."

He wanted his daughter to do it, but she says, "Why don't you ask Agnes. She takes shorthand and everything?" So I was hired the next day, and I worked thirty years for him. Well, there's a picture of him and his wife here somewhere that I worked with. Cliff Kumle was a wonderful man. Cliff Kumle Drive out there at the Elks Club is in his memory. Yes, I started at the Elks Club. It was on First Street. I worked for the Elks Club for the first thirty years that I was working for the university. I was office manager and bookkeeper and hostess and everything that I could do. Liberace even played there.

Well, did you know where the Club Fortune was? On the corner of Second and Center? That was the Club Fortune, and us kids were allowed to go in there and dance and have dinner. Liberace was always at the piano with a little bucket, and he would play, and that's how he got the money. People would put money in the bucket. He had a black suit, and he had clean shirts, but the back seat of the suit was all shiny. {laughter} I have his full life history here somewhere. Yes. He had blood poisoning in his fingers at one time on one of his hands. The doctor says, "Oh, he's going to lose that hand."

His mother said, "No, he's not." And she got him back to what he was. Well, at that time, he just had the one same suit for the Elks Club for the charity dinner. There were only night clubs here then; there were no casinos--or maybe two casinos. And they didn't have any access, you know, to anything to put on. So, he was available. They got whoever was available to come and put on a show at the Elks Club for their charity dinner.

Well, he got chosen. So, when he came in, Cliff, my boss, said, "Now, this is Agnes."

And he says, "Hello, Agnes."

When it was over, Cliff said, "You're to come to this window, and you tell her how much she owes you, and she'll write you a check."

OK. So, he was up there, and he's just banging things, and then everything was going beautifully, and it was about twelve o'clock. He says, "I think I better go home." But he says, "Cliff said you'd give me a check."

I say, "How much do I owe you?"

He says, "Is twenty dollars too much?"

Twenty dollars! For the whole evening! [laughter] We were friends forever after that. When he got out here at Johnny's, you know, out in Sparks, John Ascuaga's Nugget, why, we were always invited to come and have dinner and be with Liberace! [laughter] My dad won him over with the violin.

And Lawrence Welk—he became a very good friend of my dad's. We'd go up to Lake Tahoe to see both of these people, and we got acquainted with him. One of his musicians had an automobile accident, and *he* had a Stradivarius, and it was lost in the accident. So, they found out that my dad had a Stradivarius. We had talked to Lawrence about the violin. Every time we went up there we had to sit and visit with them about the violin. So, one time he asked my dad if he'd bring it up and let one of his men play it. My dad says, "Yes." So, he played the violin until they could get another Stradivarius and a man to play after that man was killed.

My dad got that Stradivarius when he was ten years old. His father went to San Francisco, and my dad had seen somebody playing the violin, and he said, "Dad, get me a violin." And that was after the San Francisco earthquake. So, his dad went and took a trip, and he come back with a violin. He didn't know it was a Stradivarius. [laughter] Well, as he grew up he had his violin, and he had a big ranch—his father there—between Austin and Battle Mountain. Well, my dad would go to Austin one night and play Saturday night and play all night for the dance, and then the next week at Battle Mountain. He'd take his Stradivarius, not in a regular violin case—it was handmade. I still got it. He would put it on the back of his saddle, and away he'd go. He'd play and get home in time to milk the cows in the morning. That was the time when they stayed up till dawn.

He taught himself to play. He wanted me to take it. "No," I said, "I want the piano." I studied piano sixteen years, and I can't play a note! [laughter] I played for all kinds of things around Reno and KOH and all that. Can't play a note now.

HOW AGNES GOT ALBERT

I WANT TO TELL YOU how I got Albert. Would you like to know how I got him? You're going to be in stitches. Well, I knew his sister, Gertrude. She worked for an insurance man here in Reno. Albert's first-grade schoolteacher and the sister were very good friends, and the schoolteacher, Golamae Johnson, had the job that I took at the university—my very first job at the university—because she was quitting.

So, they called me and said, "We're going to pick you up. Get some clothes. Bring some clothes tomorrow, and we're going to take you out to Albert's high school graduation." I didn't know Albert. They said, "Well, dress for the ceremonies." I had pink dress, pink shoes, pink *everything*, you know, hair ribbon and everything. And being a Virgo, that's the way I am—even *now*. [laughter]

So we got out to the ranch, and Albert ran out of the house, and he says to his sister, "I'll take up the girls' clothes and put them in the bedrooms where they're supposed to be." [laughter] So, that's all I saw him.

So, then we all took a shower and dressed in our nice clothes. I couldn't find my pink shoes, and I *knew* I had pink shoes. Oh, I was just panic-stricken, you know, because being a Virgo, I couldn't wear any other color shoe. Well, luckily the schoolteacher had

the same size shoe, and she had a pair of black shoes. I went over in black. Can you see me in pink and black? [laughter] So, she had a pair of white shoes. I didn't even have fun that evening, because I didn't have my pink shoes. So, then we stayed for breakfast before we were to come home, and Albert was sitting at the table, and his sister says, "Did you take Agnes's pink shoes out of the car?"

He kind of grinned, and she says, "Well, what did you do with them?"

"Did she go barefooted?" [laughter] That's from Albert.

I say, "No, I didn't go barefooted. What did you do with them?"

"Well," he says, "I've only seen you once besides this." He says, "I thought, 'I'm going to take her shoes so she's going to have to talk to me, and I'm going to get to know her.'" [laughter]

Oh, God! I was . . . well, being a Virgo, that wasn't . . . So, his sister says, "You apologize to her."

He says, "Agnes, I'm sorry. Could I come to Reno and take you to a movie and to dinner?"

I say, "No." [laughter]

So, then we come home, and the next day I got a phone call. He says, "This is Albert Heidtman, and I want to have a date with you, because I want to apologize to you."

I say, "You've already apologized to me." [laughter] So that was that weekend.

Then the next weekend, he didn't call, he just came. He said, "Now, I'm sorry that I made you so mad, and I understand,



"[Albert said he thought,] 'I'm going to take her shoes so she's going to have to talk to me, and I'm going to get to know her.'" Portrait of Agnes.

because everybody said you were a Virgo, and that's the way you were going to be."

I said, "OK."

"But," he says, "I'm *still* going to take you to a movie, and afterward take you to dinner."

So I went. [laughter] So then, of course, he lived in Gardnerville, worked there. And then the next thing, the Twenty Thirty Club out there was having a dinner-dance. Would I go?

I said, "No, I don't have my pink shoes." [laughter] But yes, I had them.

So, he came in, and the romance started from then on. He was persistent. He said, "When I first saw you . . ." Well, that's the only time he'd seen me, and they never told him who I was or what I was or what I looked like or anything. Oh, he came in often then to go to shows and things, and he says, "Would you consider going full time with me and being my girlfriend?"

I say, "No."

He said, "Honestly, I'm glad to know you, and I want to know you better." So that's where the romance started. Finally, during our marriage and everything, he wound up with 395 pair of shoes in my closet. Some of them are still in there. Every time we'd go to San Francisco or go shopping, I got three or four pair of shoes. All colors! [laughter]

So we were in San Francisco on our honeymoon, and we had been shopping. When we got back to the room, I kicked my shoes off, just wherever they landed. So, in the middle of the night he says, "Oh, those God-damned shoes! I've stumbled over them *twice*." [laughter] Oh, God. He never got over that. Oh, I'll tell you, he'd tell people all about it and just howl, you know. He said, "I didn't think I was ever going to win her, but when I did I got her."

But what he did for my engagement ring! He was president of Twenty Thirty Club, so he asked me to go to dinner again up to Lake Tahoe. Some of the other people that were going had a cocktail party that we could go to before we went up there. So we were invited, and everybody says, "Let me see your ring, let me see your ring!"

I said, "Which ring?" So, when we got back in the car to go up to the lake, I said, "What are they talking about—the ring?"

"Well," he said, "my loud-mouthed mother—I told her I was going to go to Reno today and buy your engagement ring. She got on the phone." Then you could get on the phone. Everybody can pick up the phone, you know, and everybody knew that I had an engagement ring. So, he says, "Do you want it now?"

"Well," I say, "save it and put it on my finger when we're going home," because he had to take me home after the dinner-dance.

Can you imagine walking in there, and everyone says, "Oh, let's see your ring."? [laughter] I got it in a deposit box now. It's a beautiful three-diamond engagement ring. I don't wear it all the time because it . . . you know, nowadays you can't . . . well, for one thing, it would have to be made bigger. So, I've got them, and once in a while I wear them. If I go somewhere, why, I'll squeeze them on. Yes.

Albert and I were engaged eleven years. I'll tell you what that eleven years took up. My dad was in the process of selling the ranch, and he had it advertised. The first thing that went off of our ranch was the ranch house, so they didn't have a house. We didn't have a house. So, I said to my mother, "Well, now, you and Dad go and find a house that you want and then let me know," because I knew his money was all tied up with the ranch, and I had a nice savings. So, my mother called me, and she said, "Oh, can you come right away to this place on Mill Street and see the man that we're talking to about the house I've seen? It's a brand new house, and it's *lovely*, and I'd love to have it, but they want a down payment."

I said, "I'll be right there," and jumped in the car. He wanted nine thousand dollars, and I said, "OK." It was too late then to go to the bank by the time I got back there, and I said, "I'll give you a check, and tomorrow morning I will go to the bank and put the money in there where it belongs." So, then my mother showed me the house, and she was so thrilled. It was off of Vassar over by Shopper's Square. Well, our house is one of those houses that Casazza owned. Some man built these four houses; they're all the same. Mother picked the one with the hardwood floors—a *beautiful* house. Big yard and everything right in the middle.

There's houses this way and this way. So, we moved. We had a temporary home over on Ryland Street that my dad rented.

So, we got the papers all fixed and everything, and then we had moving day! [laughter] We didn't tell Albert. You would have loved my mother—she was only five foot two. But she said, "You know, don't tell Albert that we've got a new home. Call him up tomorrow,"—it was a weekend—"and say that a very good friend of yours wants to have him over for dinner to see her new home."

So, I called him, and I gave him all the directions, never mentioned mother, you know. [laughter] So, he came in, and I was talking to him, and pretty soon he said, "Well, when am I going to meet that nice friend that's doing the cooking? I'm hungry."

He went to the kitchen, and my mother said, "Look at our new home!" [laughter] My mother adored Albert. Oh, she just adored him! She always said, when I had a date, "Now, don't put the dress on, just take your time, because every time he comes to the door he gives me a hug and a kiss."

I remember my moving day was in January. Snow on the ground and everything. We were all settled for when Albert came. But he went in the kitchen. Mother says, "Look at our new house." And he hung on to the counter. He didn't know.

He said, "You got this house?"

"Yes," and she says, "Agnes paid for it."

He says, "Well, good for you, and I'm glad she had the money to pay for it." We never had an argument in all our life together. We had *fun* things that happened. You know, you can have



"My mother adored Albert." Agnes's mother, Emma Swindlehurst Schmith.

a lot of fun in your life, if you remember. But, oh, I tell you, that poor Albert, what he went through! I don't know if he wanted to stay with me. But those are the ones that I wanted to tell you about.

So then, Albert's grandfather came from Germany, and he had four daughters, so when he landed in Gardnerville he bought four tumble-down ranch houses and things and was going to give a ranch house to each daughter when she got married. Oh, and tumble-downs! Their house was terrible, and, of course, his mother always said, "I've got to do something with this house".

So, he knew I was paying my parents' house off. He said, "You know, would you get mad if I asked my mother and father if I could buy a house for them or have a new house built?" Their house was terrible. You know that when we went down to his graduation, the wind was coming in—there were no windows.

So, I said, "OK."

He said, "Well, I'm going to ask them." They were thrilled to death to have the house. So Albert and I had those two bills. We discussed being married, because money is the terrible upset sometimes to the marriage, not that we'd do it, because the money was there, you know, but you never know. And so, they built their new house, a beautiful house, that he had built for them in Gardnerville. Then we postponed our wedding for eleven years—till we got those paid. Well, it was nice to know that the folks were OK. And he was all for it, too. He said, "We don't have to get married, do we?"

I said, "Well, we're not going to do anything else, you know." [laughter] In those days you didn't live together. And there was no hanky-panky. I learned that when I was growing up. I wasn't to ever do anything like that. And he was very honorable, he was. He was a nice man.

But we laughed so much every time people would say, "Well, when are you going to get married?"

Albert said, "When the houses are paid for."

"What houses are paid for?" [laughter]

I got married June 22, 1952. Our wedding was down at the Methodist church. Albert's cousin's little daughter was the flower girl. I don't know what her name is now. And then the ring bearer—he just died—Del Grand.

I told my dad, “Now, Dad, don’t go out to the ranch and get your hand hurt or something and then” He went out with a horse that morning and had Band-Aids on at the wedding. [laughter]

Mother and I made all the dresses. The dresses were pretty. My train was beautiful. My mother had a beautiful dress, chiffon dress. The wedding was at the Methodist church, and then the reception was at the Century Club right down from there. My mother used to help the woman that did all the cooking there. She’d go and help her. So we didn’t get charged for any of this. And Albert didn’t get cake all over his face. I told him I wouldn’t like that. It was a wonderful day, and the little kids were so good. The ring bearer’s father was a banker for years. [Reading from the wedding guest book] “The ceremony was officiated by Reverend Arthur Thurman. Attendants were Emery Graunke, Lauren Johnson, Louis Schmith, Bill White, Max Jones, Roy Godecke, Walter Heidtman, Della Schmith, Ann Dudley, Maxine Harvey, Joan Schmith, Sally Alexander, Irene Orriaga, Esther Galli.” These memory things when you get old But it was a lovely, lovely wedding.

Albert’s partner was the best man at our wedding—Emery Graunke. He got the gambling fever. Albert was a partner in business with him. He had asked Albert for some money, and Albert had said, “No.” He had wanted to buy Albert out, so he gave him the money that he’d owed him, and then he asked for it back, because he had to pay some bills. So, Albert said, “No, I promised Agnes she could



The bride with her father and attendants. *“He went out with a horse that morning and had Band-Aids on at the wedding.”*



Agnes and Albert's wedding, June 22, 1952.

have new carpet in her house.” We’d go out there for dinner, for anything. He and his wife were up at Lake Tahoe gambling. And so it got to him—the gambling. And so then no more was said about that. So, one Sunday Albert was there, and we were having lunch with the Kumles, the man that I worked for at the Elks Club for thirty years. He and his wife were there, and the phone rang, and they said, “Is Albert there?”

Albert says, “Oh, no!” His partner had committed suicide in the office that they had in Gardnerville. He had it all written out, \$350,000. He was in debt to everybody—his mother and his father and all the people out there, and that’s why he had wanted the money from Albert. So he committed suicide, and he wrote letters for everything. He listed each amount of money that he owed these people. Albert said, “Well, thank God, I got out when I did.” He broke his mother and father, and he borrowed money from his relatives. He was such a good little boy and such a nice boy, you know, like they are in those small towns. Albert said, “Now, what do I do? Do I go to the funeral, or what do I do?”

I said, “Let your heart guide you. I don’t know.” Well, he went to the funeral, and he and one other man were the only people there. *None of his family or anybody* was at the funeral. “Boy,” I said, “it’s a good thing Albert took care of that, because where would I get that much money?”

And they'd be at you all the time, "I want the money, I want the money."

I have to tell you a story about Albert at our wedding. He did a lot of traveling with Dressler's ranches, you know? And he bought a new car nearly every year. Well, he had a friend out in Gardnerville, and every time Albert bought a new car, this friend of his would always get the identical car—every year. Well, this friend was at the wedding, and we were at the Century Club, but Eva Martin, the physiotherapist, she was going to take us away from the wedding reception. So she had Albert's car, and the friend's car was in the driveway by the Century Club, and he had his girlfriend with him. Eva Martin took our car and put it over in her garage. Her car was there, see, so that she could take us. She had Albert's car and hid it. And so then—I'll never forget that guy—he come out, and he said, "Who the hell decorated my car?" [laughter]

And the girlfriend had to get to work, and he was so . . . God, was he mad! "Just Married" and all the tin cans! [laughter]

He had to take her to work. Everybody come out and said, "Did you get married?" [laughter]

Never bought another car like Albert's. [laughter] We just howled. When we told the rest of the visitors there, they said, "It serves him right for buying the same car." Oh, it had "Just Married" and tin cans!

Albert's car was sitting over in the garage of a neighbor's house where we were, and they put it in their garage. [laughter] Isn't that too good? See, I've had a good life.



Agnes and Albert on their honeymoon.



Agnes and Albert Heidtman on a trip.

Well, he never got another car like Albert's. He just died this last year.

I became pregnant the first year of my marriage, and my ovaries ruptured. And they were trying to save my mother from her heart deal and me from my bleeding. My mother had a heart problem, and we had doctors come up from California, and they said, "We don't know anything about the heart." Look what they do today. The 1950's—they couldn't do it. So, she was in the Washoe Hospital, and I was in Saint Mary's Hospital, and I had to have nine bottles of blood to save me, because I almost bled to death. All the boys, the hunters—nine of the hunting mates of my husband—came in in person and replaced all the blood. In those days you could do it. Anyhow, I survived, but, boy, I was a pretty sick gal. Then, my mother died Monday in that hospital, and I was stuck in Saint Mary's. It was June 23, 1953. But she had had rheumatic fever when she was a child, and that's with the heart because you couldn't . . . now, they take it out and make it over. I have a pig valve in mine—since 1989.

Albert and I wondered if we would have had six children, probably, because we had all the twins in the family. Three sets of twins, yes. [laughter] But, no, my mother had gone, and we

decided we wouldn't adopt—what with my father and not too certain about my health at that time, too. So everybody says, "Why don't you adopt?" Albert and I discussed it, and we decided we wouldn't, and then, it's a good thing we didn't, because my aunt and uncle that lived in Battle Mountain were in a terrible accident. They went to Elko for a ball game, and then they stopped in Carlin to have some cake and ice cream before they got to Battle Mountain. We got the notice at two o'clock in the morning that there'd been a very terrible accident between Reno and Battle Mountain.

So my neighbor, Eva Martin—we woke her up at two o'clock in the morning and asked her to

be sure to check the house and the dogs, and that we were leaving. She says, "Now, don't go too fast, because it's not going to help you one way or the other." We didn't know how bad it was then.

So, we got there, and they were putting my aunt on an ambulance plane to take her to Elko, and I can remember my father saying to Albert, "Where's Frank?"

Albert says, "He was killed." And my father just . . . they were real close.

So, I said, "Have you got room on the plane for me to go to Elko?"



Agnes's aunt and uncle, Polly and Frank Eaton.

“Yes, there’s one seat,” this nurse said.

I knew my aunt. It was traditional, no matter where she went, if she went to a rodeo or what, she had all her diamonds on—diamond rings, diamond watch, everything. So, I said to the nurse, “Where are all her diamonds?”

She says, “What diamonds?”

I say, “*Her* diamonds.” She reached in her pocket, and there were the diamonds. So that’s what happens in accidents. I knew about the diamonds, and, boy, that nurse could have died. She could have dropped dead right there. She handed them all over to me, and then I gave them to Albert, because he was coming back, and he took them to Herz’s and had them all checked and everything. But that’s horrible.

Well, anyhow, my uncle was killed instantly, and my aunt went through the windshield and had two hundred stitches in her head and a broken pelvis and a broken arm and all peeled up. He had got to that Dunphy Overpass over the railroad, and the truck driver with a trailer of detonated bombs was coming over the bridge, and he said that when he got where he saw what was coming he lost . . . that’s when my uncle hit the bridge, the edge of the bridge, and it threw him right in front of the truck. But he was killed before that. Well, the car was just crushed when it hit the truck.

I don’t know why my aunt’s brother was out in front of the hospital instead of down there. He was in Elko. Why didn’t he go down there and see what he could do? Nothing. I say, “What the hell are you doing here?”

“Well, I’m waiting to see what you’re all going to do.”

I say, “Thanks a lot,” and I never did speak to him after that.

He never even tried to find out what happened. He said, “I knew I’d find out sooner or later.”

And I thought, “How you can be that way?” No.

Well, anyhow, Dr. Hood says, “We’re going to have to take her arm off.”

I said, “No, you’re not.” That was that young Dr. Hood. I said, “I’ll take her to Salt Lake before you’ll do that.”

He said, “Well, look at how it’s all peeled and everything, and you’ll get an infection.”

I said, "We'll wait for that." Oh, he was mad at me!

So, during that day he says, "OK, if you insist on saving that arm, you're going to have to sit here by her bedside for six weeks, keeping the moisture on it."

I said, "All right. I'll be here for six weeks." And I did. And then, here's all the scabs and all the new flesh under that, and when those scabs come off, there's no reason for her arm to be taken off. Well, I let him know about that. I said, "Why do you want to do something with her now, when you had to tell her her husband was killed, and now you want to take her arm off? You're not going to do it. I will take her to Salt Lake right away." And the plane was still there, so

Well, we got friendly, and I kept the moisture on her for *six weeks*, day and night. Then we flew her to Reno for Doctor Herz, the older Doctor Herz—Jim Herz. He took care of her. She did have a broken pelvis and all that, broken spine and all that. So she lived with us sixteen years.

Well, what she'd wanted to do after she sold her house and got the estate all settled and everything—she says, "I want to come to Reno and live with you folks." Well, she wanted my dad to put an apartment over our double garage. Well, she couldn't go up and down stairs with a broken pelvis, so what are you going to do?

He said, "No way."

And just luckily, the neighbor next to us—they had divorced—and there was a "For Sale" sign on that house. So, Albert got her in to look at the house, and he says, "Now, here is what you can do. You can buy that house, and you can live the rest of your life next door to us."

She says, "Oh, that's perfect! There's no stairs. I don't have to go up stairs."

And he says, "You'd never make it up to an apartment over the garage."

"OK." She says, "OK, I'll buy it and put it in yours and Agnes's name, because your property is right next to it." So she got it, and she lived sixteen years there. But she was something else. She was from Wales. Her name was Polly Eaton. Her husband was Frank Eaton. He was in gambling and everything else, and he was

eighty years old, and my dad was eighty years old, and they were out riding horses and branding calves and everything else. And they're ornery gentlemen. [laughter]

Dr. Herz had my aunt on physical therapy. He had her on that, and she did pretty good. In fact, she went driving her car again. And she had a small car. Well, anyhow, then she fell. That was in 1971. She fell and broke her . . . well, he said her hip was broken when she fell, you know, because of age—osteoporosis. So, we took care of it, and we took care of her funeral. And she had one nephew in Sacramento. And my uncle had a plane, and he'd come down and pick up my dad. Call him and said, "Smitty, let's go flying." And he'd pick him up, and they'd go to Lake Tahoe and Elko and all over the place. They all did horseback riding and everything around Battle Mountain and that area. My dad would go out and put his car in, meet him, and away they'd go. And my dad was eighty-three, and he was eighty-three, my uncle. [laughter]

So, then my aunt left all that property to us; she left all her money to us. Albert went with her, and she sold her house and all this stuff—his plane and everything—and settled the estate when Uncle Frank died. Well, this nephew of hers in Sacramento, he *hated* us. He was going to sue us. He wanted that airplane! And Albert says, "It wasn't left to you. If you want to buy it from the estate, go ahead."

"Well, I'm not going to buy it." Well, she did leave him two thousand dollars, because he's a . . . ah, one of those ones, you know, more important than anybody else. He eventually died of cancer.

My dad was fine. He was with us all that time, and my aunt was with us sixteen years, and then she died, and then my father died in 1971.

My neighbor, Eva Martin, was a physiotherapist here. She wanted to be by us when she saw our house, but she always wanted to build her own house. So, the man that owned the hot springs out that way . . . well, he had a swimming pool out there, Lawton's. Let's see, he had the hot springs out there. He had two sons and a daughter, and he owned a piece of property next to us. So she says, "I will talk to him."

He says, "I won't sell it to you, I'm going to save it for my sons."

Well, I knew him real well. I used to swim there, and I knew all his kids. It was right next to our property, because Albert and I had all that other property surrounding it. So she said, "Will you go talk to him?"

I said, "Sure." I asked him if I could come up and visit with him. I hadn't seen him since his daughter had been killed.

"Oh," he says, "Agnes, I'd *love* to see you." Italian, you know. Course, then, come to the door with a glass of red wine. [laughter] "Come in, Agnes."

So, I asked him, I said, "What are you going to do with that property over there by me?"

"Oh, I'm not going to do anything with it."

I say, "What do you want for it?"

He says, "I want six thousand dollars."

She had said go ahead and take whatever he offered, because she wanted it so bad. "Get it in your name, though." So, we got out the papers. The next morning Albert went to the bank and got the money, six thousand dollars. [laughter] She built a beautiful home there. It's still sitting there. And, of course, we were right there. So we were all happy, except that then she died, and then the three of them—my dad and my aunt and she—died all in 1971. One right after the other.

I have to tell you about my aunt at Elko with Dr. Hood. Last year, he won . . . what do they give at commencement to outstanding people? Distinguished Nevadan. He was here getting his Distinguished Nevadan Award. And, of course, I always worked on commencements, helped with the hooding and everything. Get them in line in the right place and go in and then, you know, take care of all the hoods that had to be sent back and everything. Well, I always worked commencement. So, Dr. Hood was standing there. He didn't have the hood. They don't have them when they get those awards. They don't have any hoods or anything. So, he was just standing there, and I was sitting there waiting to robe them, and I walked up to him, and I said, "Hello, Dr. Hood. How are you?"

He says, "I beg your pardon, I don't even know you."

I say, "I think you *do* know me."

"Well, where would I know you?"

I say, "Just sit down a minute, and I'll tell you where you know me." [laughter]

"I don't know you. Why should I sit here?"

"Just sit quiet, and I'll tell you why you know me." I say, "Do you remember the name of Polly Eaton?"

[Gasps] "You're Agnes! You're the one that was her . . . her niece." I think he could have crawled under the table!

I say, "Yes, I'm the one. You're the one that wanted to take her arm off. And now you're getting an award."

He didn't know what to say. He didn't know if he was to sit there or if he should come over. [laughter] But he remembered me when he heard Polly Eaton. "And she still has her arm." Well, he shook hands with me, and he says, "I'm sorry I was that bad with you, but," he said, "I didn't think you knew much about medicine."

"I didn't know anything about medicine, but I knew you weren't going to take her arm off."

He says, "I'm glad I didn't. I'd have had a lot of problems with you." He laughed and shook hands with me. I'm terrible with people. [laughter]

The accident happened in 1956—along in there. We were all going to Hawaii, and they had to go to Elko, and that was when the accident happened. She had been down here making clothes for Hawaii and everything and went back home to see the ball game, and that was it. But she weathered it pretty good. She had a broken back, and Dr. Herz treated her for, well, about sixteen years of her breaks and things and took care of her.

I knew Dr. Herz when I was growing up. They had the only sidewalks around their house, and from our ranch we could see their house on Wells Avenue, so all of us kids would go there and roller skate. [laughter] I'd fall, and my knees would be skinned off—scraped and stuff. And he'd put on Band-Aids or something. I said, "You're going to be a good doctor someday."

"No, I'm not!" And he's one of the best orthopedic doctors. I think he's semi-retired now. No, I've had a very colorful life!

AGNES'S CADILLAC

ALBERT HAD NINE Chevrolets. Then he bought a big Chrysler New Yorker from a neighbor down here. He saw a “For Sale” sign on it, and he wasn’t going to buy another Chevrolet. So that’s the one I got when he died, but it was too big a car. Adams—he restores old cars, and he serviced this car for me, even when Albert was alive. It’s a big car, and I had it out there, and he took it. He had to do some work on it. He said, “I’ll keep it a few days.”

I said, “OK.”

He said, “Why don’t you sell this car and get yourself a new car?”

I said, “Because it’s Albert’s car, and I want it.”

Well, he fixed it up, and I drove it quite awhile, and then, he called me one day at the university and said, “Agnes, I think that’s too big a car. Why don’t you get a new car? I’ve got a sale for that car.” This man had seen that car. Come to find out, it was one that worked there. So he said, “I’m going to send him over to the university to see you.”

So, he came over, and he said, “I’m going to give you this much money for that car.” He still has the car. [laughter]

So then, what did we do? We were going through Albert’s investments and things, and here was an envelope, because I had

always said, "You know, Albert, someday you can buy me a Cadillac."

"I'll do that."

I said, "OK." So we found this envelope after Albert died: "Money for Agnes's Cadillac." [laughter] He had saved up, and I bet, if he had lived another Christmas, that would have been my Christmas present. Anyhow, that's some story.

Well, now, everybody wants to know why I got the Cadillac and how I got the Cadillac and how I paid for the Cadillac. I say, "It's all paid for. You don't need to know."

Well, I was going with friends to go to see a movie out there on Virginia Street, to see dog pictures. Well, then we stopped at Heidi's to have something to eat, and then we went over to go to the movie, and they weren't having dog pictures. So, we went back to the car, and I say, "Let's go look at the Cadillacs. We can't go to the show, and it's right next door." [laughter]

So the salesman was very nice, and he says, "Would you like to try one of them out?"

I say, "Yes," because I had to come home at that time to give Sizzler his medicine, so we drove out here.

I say, "I'm supposed to have a yellow Cadillac."

The salesman said, "A yellow one? We haven't had a yellow one for years, but we can have it made, and it's going to cost you a fortune."

I said, "What's that one right in the middle of the showroom?" He was all fit to be tied. I said, "I like that one in the middle." I said, "What is it?"

He said, "That's a white diamond Cadillac, lady."

I said, "OK. I want to try that one out." [laughter]

So he said, "Well, try some of the others."

I said, "No, I want that car. I want to try that one right in the middle of the showroom. [laughter]

Well, he went and got another man, and the other man said, "They're all the same. Why don't you try the other one?"

I said, "I want to see *that* car. I want to try *that* car." [laughter] I said, "I want that car."

He said, "This is Sunday, you know?"

I said, "That's why I'm here."

And the other man looked and said, "Well, come on in the office. We'll talk. I don't know what you're talking about." Well, then he ordered that car taken out of the center of the showroom. The man sat down, got the paper and everything. "Now, just how do you plan to pay for this?"

I said, "Make out the papers, and I'll give you a check, but you can't cash it until day after tomorrow, because I've got to go to the bank and put the money there available for you."

The two of them—the sweat was running off. And this one, Scott's son, of Scott Motors—my dad used to work for him at Buick. And so, this man said, "Well, you sure you want that car?"

I said, "I'm sure, and I got a check right here that I can write out for you, and you keep it until tomorrow morning," or whatever it was, the next day, "to give me time to go to the bank."

He said, "Do you really believe her?" to that man—right in front of me!

I said, "Well, do you have any other people that I could talk to about it?"

"Oh, no, that's all right, that's all right. We'll handle it." So I wrote them out a check. [laughter] The money was there, and Albert wanted me to have it.

"You want to pay for the *whole car*?"

"Yes, I want the whole car." And I said, "I'll pay you cash for it. What do you think, I want a half a car?" And they were about ready to kick me out, you know. But I knew his son so well, you know. And so, we drove the car home. And it didn't have much gas in it, so I had to take it back to them the next day, so I'd get a full tank. But they give you good service. Yes, I don't take it anywhere else to have it serviced.

Then, I was at one of the dinners that they have at the university every year. Anyhow, I was right there, and I was waiting for my car, and then this man was standing behind me, and I knew he was Dan Scott, the son. He kept touching my shoulder, so I turned around, and I said, "What do you want with me, Mr. Scott?"

"Oh! You're Agnes Heidtman!"

I said, "Well, should I be somebody else?"

He said, “No, but I’ve been wanting to thank you for buying that gorgeous car. If you have any trouble or anything, just come to me.”

I said, “There’s a picture of my father in one of your pictures in there. He worked for your father several years before he ever became Cadillac. He was a Buick man.” [laughter] My dad sold the cars or serviced them or anything. He was the janitor. Well, see, my dad’s mother married again. And he had an interest in the ranch out here, so my dad was available to do anything he wanted to. He didn’t have to stay at the ranch. And that’s when he met Harry Heidtman, who was a salesman for Scott at the Buick agency. And he was running for mayor here. His name was Heidtman, Harry Heidtman. So my dad worked for him, and then, when Scott moved across the street—there used to be a theater on that corner there—that’s when my dad went full-time with him. Harry Heidtman was no relation to Albert. No. But he was running for mayor. He’s a wonderful man. He got it, too. But, it’s been fun. And he had a secretary there, and I’d go in every once in awhile and, whoa, she was just typing, you know. I said, “I’m going to type like you, like that, someday.”

She says, “Knowing you, I’m sure you will.” I did.

But the salesman said, “You want to buy the *whole thing*?”

Well, I wasn’t going to buy a half a car! [laughter] I’ve *never* lived that down.

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